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HOLMES

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Bergamo, Carrara Gallery

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MANTEGNA  
MADONNA

AN  
INTRODUCTION  
TO  
ITALIAN PAINTING

BY  
SIR CHARLES HOLMES

WITH FORTY PLATES



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## PREFACE

THIS book can make no claim to novelty. Elementary works on Italian art must all cover much the same ground, and be constructed from materials which are accessible to everyone. The main facts are well known. The main principles are ceasing to be bones of controversy. The best that a new book can do is to seize the salient points, and set them out in the shape which the reader can grasp most easily and remember most clearly.

Any great exhibition of Italian paintings, such as that of 1929-30 at Burlington House, will naturally bring the subject to the attention of many who have neither travelled in Italy, nor given much thought to the innumerable questions artistic and historical which such a display must invite. For them in particular this book is designed. In it I have tried to include all that the untrained visitor will need for a preliminary survey. One or two suggestions for those who wish to carry their studies further will be found in the Appendix.

Few people who visit an important Gallery or Museum without any sort of preparation can leave it without some mental confusion, or the feeling that they have probably overlooked some of the very best things. The stars in a Baedeker meet a real human need. So in this little book I have

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tried to emphasize (by means of capital letters and otherwise) the principal figures and movements, and to present them in proper sequence. Coupled with a little knowledge of Italian geography, as explained in Chapter II, these make the real framework for sound knowledge. When once these major relations are fairly grasped, the minor figures (generally indicated here by small type) can easily be fitted into their appropriate corners.

The distinctions I have drawn between major and minor figures cannot possibly satisfy everyone. We all have our favourites. But the general principle adopted may be explained as follows. The majority of Italian paintings from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century were not independent creations of the artist's fancy, as paintings are wont to be now. They were commissions to illustrate certain stock themes—images of the Madonna and patron saints, or scenes from sacred history—for which tradition and authority had already dictated the general shape and treatment. The minor artist was content to stay within those traditional limits, repeating what had been done before, with perhaps a few unimportant variations. The great men were those who could view these ancient themes with fresh eyes, and could invest them with some new quality of Life, of Form, of Design, or of Colour, which was incorporated in time with the general artistic tradition.

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By this quality of invention, of invention that is practical and serviceable to posterity, the great man is distinguished. Those who merely imitate, adapt, or polish up the inventions of others, remain minor figures, however clever and attractive their work may sometimes be. In Italy the original artists, the great inventors, are found chiefly in the Florentine and Venetian Schools. To these schools, in consequence, the chief prominence has been allotted. The Sienese and Milanese Schools, on the other hand, are generally imitative; often, of course, in a very charming way. Here, therefore, they receive much less space and more small print than a regular history would allow.

Again; inventions which give little practical help or inspiration to others are no more than curiosities. Any painter, therefore, who works in a style from which his successors can derive no substantial benefit, cannot be counted among the great masters. So the majority of the later Italian painters are rightly left to specialists. A Crespi or a Strozzi may from time to time strike some fresh and vigorous note, and the period produced a number of capable portraits. Yet the vast and usually rather murky compositions of these later artists teach us nothing which cannot really be learned better elsewhere, so the popular taste is not wholly at fault when it views them rather cursorily.

Much primitive painting is open to similar

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criticism. The specialist, the collector, or the historian will naturally see in it the reflection of the greatness from which it is derived, or to which it leads up. The beginner must be careful that he does not mistake that reflection for a reality. He will therefore be wise to make acquaintance with the central figures and the central period of Italian art, before he devotes much time either to its old age or to its extreme infancy.

This distinction between great and small may appear, at times, to be too sharply emphasized. If so, I must plead that in a very small book, written for the unlearned, clarity of presentation has a paramount claim. There is no room for complicated gradations. And the scale of the volume has restricted me in another way. Some of the greatest Italian masters, Raphael for example, have found the fullest expression for their genius only in large paintings which can never leave Italy. No book on Italian art would be complete which did not refer constantly to such master works. Yet even big photographs do not always give us a fair notion of their quality; little ones are quite inadequate or positively misleading. In the Appendix I have indicated one or two sources from which the untravelled inquirer may supplement the reproductions in the book.

C. J. H.

*November, 1929.*

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# AN INTRODUCTION TO ITALIAN PAINTING

## CHAPTER I

### *How to Study Italian Painting*

WHY have all highly civilized nations given so much thought to the Fine Arts? At first, no doubt, men saw in them only a source of pleasure to the eye. When a cup or a weapon or a building was exquisitely finished, or decorated with some appropriate ornament, its owner had a delight in its possession and use which no rude or common work could inspire. As time went on, such choice specimens of handicraft acquired a new potency. Men began to realize that they were records of past achievement, as well as things delightful in themselves. So priests and kings came to patronize the arts, not only as an impressive reminder to their subjects of present authority and magnificence, but also as a lasting testimony to that greatness for future ages to admire.

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It is only through the arts that a man can leave any satisfactory memorial of himself and of his epoch, or that a nation can attain to immortality. The great men, and the mighty peoples of the past, even when there is some mention of them in history, remain but phantom figures, unless we can form some visual idea of them and their mode of life through the relics of their painting or sculpture. So the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia, of Egypt and Crete, of Greece and Rome, of China and Japan, are become realities for us, while the countless nations of the dead which have left us no artistic monuments are dead indeed.

The art of Italy, quite apart from its intrinsic beauty and interest, will thus make visible to us the spirit and personality of the men who led the way in developing our present civilization. During the period covered by Italian painting, the restrictions upon human thought and progress which were part of the heritage of the Middle Ages were gradually swept away. The Renaissance—the Rebirth of Learning and of Man—brought with it a flood of fresh knowledge and fresh energy. Italian scholars made classical literature a necessary part of a liberal education. With it came a new freedom of speculative thought, which, in turn, led to that immense advance in science during the seventeenth century from which our modern methods of research are directly derived. The study of Italian painting

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begins with pure mediævalism: it ends upon the threshold of the French Revolution. No other epoch in the history of mankind, not even the brief splendour of Greece, is more full of significance for us to-day: of none do we possess so superb a picture book.

It would, however, be a mistake to think of Italian art as nothing more than an illustrated record of man's aspiration and achievement in an all-important epoch. Were it only that, it would still be an essential part of a sound education. But it would not be a permanent source of inspiration and enjoyment: of inspiration to all who practise any form of the Fine Arts; of enjoyment to many thousands more who wish to make the best use of life, and who in other respects have shown that they are not wanting in intelligence.

This is not the place for a study of the nature and sources of æsthetic pleasure. It will be enough to recognize that most of us do take some sort of pleasure in looking at works of art, and that the pleasure increases as our knowledge and experience progress. In the same way, the greatest works of music do not yield their secret to us all at once. Each time we re-hear them we discover some new beauty; while the tune which captures our fancy at the first hearing, will often turn out on fuller acquaintance to be an empty jingle. Only by concentrating attention upon works which are recog-

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nized as masterpieces by the common consent of all men whose opinion is worth having, can we lay a firm foundation for future judgment. Italian art presents us with a sequence of such masterpieces, and for that reason it has been studied, and will be studied, by those who wish to get all the pleasure they can out of pictures and sculpture.

And at this point we may ask ourselves: "Why do the Italians count for so much in the Arts?" Why has a study of Italian painting and sculpture been regarded for centuries as the foundation of all serious æsthetic knowledge? The answer is two-fold. In the first place: in the quantity, quality and variety of her surviving artistic products Italy is richer than any other nation. In the second place: art in Italy grew to its full stature by a definite and logical progress, each step of which can be marked and explained. Elsewhere we do not find this orderly development. In Flanders, for example, art was largely a product of the human hand and eyesight, attaining to a sudden perfection with the brothers Van Eyck, and suffering eclipse when their immediate influence died out. Rubens and Van Dyck, assimilating with wonderful genius the principles of Italian art, brought about a brilliant revival: the revival was even more shortlived than its predecessor. In Holland, the genius of a few painters carried the painting of cabinet pictures

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to perfection. Their secret was immediately lost. Rembrandt and Hals did wonderful things in other ways. Both died in poverty and neglect, leaving no permanent artistic issue.

But in Italy, when once men's minds became aware of the attraction and importance of the Fine Arts, the principles and practice of painting and sculpture became the subjects of lively discussion. The problem of representing the human form was not solved by mere accuracy of hand and eye, as with the northern craftsmen. It was brought into due relation with geometry and mathematics, and then with scientific anatomy. The principles of art became, in consequence, a matter of precise and demonstrable knowledge, which could be in some measure acquired by study, and used as a firm basis for the employment of such natural gifts of creation and execution as the scholar might possess. This intellectual progress was of course a cumulative progress. Each generation added something to the general stock of theory and technical science. At each stage we can clearly mark what had already been achieved, and what had still to be learned and worked out. By studying Italian art in this way, we get an insight into the working principles of all the arts such as we could derive from no other source. Incidentally, too, we understand why on this firm substratum of applied science, the genius of Italy was able to construct a sequence

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of master works no less various than they are magnificent.

These Italian masterpieces, moreover, are of very different kinds. Italy, as we shall see, was divided into separate states, each with a marked individuality of taste and temper. Hence we find a singular diversity of gifts amongst painters working at the same period and in the same general spirit. The diversity due to Time is more easily understood. In the course of some five centuries Italy passed from mediævalism to modernity, and the successive stages of growth were marked by great achievements which necessarily reflect the spirit and knowledge of the particular age in which they were executed. Once or twice a great genius, like the sculptor Donatello, may appear to overstep the frontiers of time, and to produce work which anticipates the invention of future centuries. But such exceptions are rare. As a rule each master delivers his message in the language of his own age and district. If we are to understand him we must understand the language in which he speaks, and if it seems to differ from our own idiom, we must make the necessary allowance.

The first lesson, in fact, that we have to learn is the lesson of tolerance. We are all apt to be rather impatient, at first, with the early manifestations of art. And with that impatience, goes a tendency

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from which even well-educated persons are not always exempt, to think of those who are interested in such things, as being mere antiquaries or pedants. So the man in the street is apt to regard with suspicion, if not with contempt, those who take pleasure in Byzantine mosaics or Italian primitive paintings. He finds it hard to believe that they can be either sensible or quite sincere in admiring works which look so gaunt and awkward to an eye trained on photography and the illustrated papers.

If we are to get any lasting pleasure from the arts, and to pass any reasoned judgment upon them, we must get rid of this feeling as quickly as we can. And there is only one way to set about it. We must learn to put ourselves into the place of the people for whom these works of art were produced, and to see them with their eyes. In music we do not find out the full greatness of Beethoven and Wagner until we have some knowledge of the progress made long before by Glück and Mozart, with simpler aims and a smaller orchestra. And in politics we often note that experiments are advocated, or actually made, which have been tried time after time in the ancient world, and have time after time led to failure. A little knowledge of past history would have shown them to be radically unsound. So the great triumphs of the Renaissance, and its failures too, have a real value for us, if we try to see them in true perspective, as

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developments from the achievements of those who went before and prepared the way.

Tolerance, then, is the virtue which we must first cultivate. Only by its help can we attain to knowledge. But we need not, as I have said elsewhere, try, just for the sake of tolerance, to force ourselves into an equality of admiration. On the contrary. As it is by sympathy that we approach pictures in the first instance; so sympathy must remain our guide to the end. By determining to master the true value and quality of the things to which we are instinctively attracted, we shall come, in time, to understand the things of which the attractions at first were not so apparent. These, indeed, often prove to have the deepest significance of all, and their discovery will give us the thrill of surprise and pleasure which means that we are face to face with Beauty.

## CHAPTER II

### *The Schools of Italian Painting*

THE contributions made by Italy to the Fine Arts cannot be studied as we study some single piece of local history. There is no ordered growth of art over the whole country, but rather a series of outbursts in different cities and provinces, outbursts not always contemporary with each other, and never having quite the same ideals or manner of development. These outbursts we are accustomed to speak of as "Schools," and a general knowledge of these separate movements is an essential preliminary to any comprehension of Italian art as a whole.

What then is a "School"?

Though the word "School" in relation to painting is used in a double sense, only one of its two meanings calls for a brief explanation. When a painting is labelled "School of Botticelli," the meaning of the label is simple enough. It classifies the painter as one who was either directly trained under Botticelli in his studio at Florence, or was so strongly influenced by Botticelli's example as to be most easily classified and remembered by the resemblance to his model.

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Every successful artist of the Renaissance kept a *bottega*, or workshop, in which his commissions were executed. Here he trained his apprentices, who, in Florence at least, commonly began to learn a craft on completing their thirteenth year. Here, too, worked the master's assistants. Sometimes these were apprentices who had served their time but had not yet set up for themselves. Or they were artists from outside, who thus joined themselves to a famous master to improve their own practice or to earn a living. The master provided drawings and designs for the commissions which came to him. The preparation of the materials, the cartoons and, in the case of painting, of the panels and colours needed, was the business of the assistants, who also painted the accessories of large works, and often entirely executed less important orders from the designs which the master furnished. When the apprentices and assistants left the *bottega*, to work elsewhere, they naturally took with them memories of their master's style and technical tradition, so that even when they were no longer definitely connected with his studio their products would have to be classified as belonging to his "School." This was particularly the case with men of mediocre talent, who had not much natural originality; they followed obediently in their teacher's footsteps. The more gifted artist would break away in the course of time, to develop independently and perhaps found a "School" of his own.

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In its other application, the word "School" assumes a wider and rather more complex meaning. In general it may be said to cover any group of artists united by some common civic or racial tendency. When associated with the name of a city, like the "Schools" of Florence or Milan, it carries with it a distinct territorial significance;—the suggestion of a local taste and achievement which is quite definite. But where the precise origin of a picture is uncertain, it is impossible to attach to it the name of any particular city. Then such a term as "North Italian School" may be used for work which cannot be ascribed to any single town or district in Lombardy or Piedmont, but which is clearly sub-Alpine in character.

The various states and sovereignties into which Italy was divided until the latter part of the nineteenth century, were in most cases not mere arbitrary divisions of territory, as a result of treaties or conquest, but represented aggregates of men quite distinct in mental temper. When learning was reborn in the early part of the period which we term the Renaissance, it was reborn in an Italy devoted to incessant internal warfare. State struggled with state for pre-eminence, or for existence; city with city. The result was a confinement of each warring unit to its fortified towns, with the inevitable result that the characteristics of each locality were confirmed and intensified by patriotism and inbreeding.

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*Map of Italy, to illustrate the chief  
centres of artistic activity from  
A.D. 1300 to the close of  
the eighteenth century*

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Not until the seventeenth century do we find any approach to what we may term a national style of work. The foundation, and perhaps even the chief part, of the edifice of Italian art is a various and determined provincialism.

If, then, we wish to form a clear mental picture of Italian art, we must begin by calling to mind the main features of Italian geography. We shall thus understand the relation of each "School" to its neighbours, and be able to associate each type of painting with the place of its origin.

We shall see how the character of the Venetians was determined by their position between the Alps and the Adriatic;—the mountains providing a hardy stock, while the sea was their commercial highway to Constantinople and the East. Their neighbours in Lombardy had no sea to expand their horizon; they are in consequence more prosaic. Then to the south, stretches the Emilia, with its capital Bologna; the half-way house between Venice and Florence. Bologna thus became the natural home of the Eclectic School, which aimed at combining, *inter alia*, the colouring and naturalism of the Venetians with the Florentine knowledge of the human form.

Travelling south from Bologna, through the passes of the Apennines we come into Tuscany. Not far from the road lie the famous marble quarries of Carrara, which played no small part in deter-

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mining the bent of the Florentine genius. For here, close at hand, the sculptors of Florence had a wealth of almost perfect material provided for them, so that Florentine supremacy in the study of solid form, whether in marble or in painting, must in some measure be attributed to this singular local advantage. The other great Tuscan school, that of Siena, farther to the south, shows no such pre-occupation, but is content to develop the Mediævalism which came to her from Rome and Byzantium.

To the south-east under the Apennines lies Umbria, a hilly country with wide views over the plains lying beneath. Here, at Assisi in the Church of S. Francis, began the transition from Mediæval to Renaissance painting; here too, at Urbino, was born the great Raphael. From Umbria we pass southwards to Rome, too busy with the things of this world to be creative, but wealthy, ready to patronize creators from elsewhere, and to influence them by contact with the remains of Greco-Roman art, which were being constantly dug up from the city's foundations.

Naples, under a sequence of foreign rulers, Normans, French and Spanish, had for a long time little in common with the rest of Italy. But in the seventeenth century, she became the centre at which Roman and Spanish talent came together, and the Neapolitan School of that period had an influence upon painting which has lasted to our own time.

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Apart from these broad divisions, and inside them, there were numerous subdivisions. In many parts of Northern and Central Italy during the Renaissance, almost every considerable city had an independent sovereignty, was the centre of a little state, and, sometimes, cultivated the arts with enough success to have a "School" of its own. So, let me repeat, we need rather more than a general idea of Italian geography in order to get the full benefit of the labels upon the Italian pictures which we see. We may not all be able to visit Italy, but if we are willing to begin by studying a map of the country, it will make many things plain which we might otherwise find confusing, and provide us with a series of sound pegs upon which each fragment of knowledge we acquire may be hung in its proper place.

Our task is made lighter by the fact that the various Schools did not always, or usually, flourish at the same time. As one School becomes exhausted the torch of creative energy is caught up by another. In fact if we get this chronological succession once fixed in our minds, we have an outline of the whole history of Italian painting. The succession may be summarized thus—

### A.D. 1300-1400

During the fourteenth century, Florence and Siena take the lead. Giotto in Florence and Duccio

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in Siena are the pioneers in liberating the arts from the rigid mediæval tradition.

### A.D. 1400-1500

In the fifteenth century, Florence attains unchallenged supremacy. There the sculptor Donatello, with Masaccio, Pollaiuolo, Leonardo da Vinci and others,—some of them, like Piero della Francesca and Signorelli, drawn from outside into the Florentine orbit,—lay a firm foundation for all future painting by their scientific study of the human figure.

In the North, towards the end of the century, Padua and Ferrara, with Mantegna and other scholarly masters, introduce a similar firmness to the Venetian territory.

### A.D. 1500-1525

The first quarter of the sixteenth century is devoted everywhere to exploiting the new knowledge. Rome attracts Michelangelo from Florence; the Umbrian Raphael follows. Their gigantic efforts in a few years furnish Rome with its most famous paintings. Milan attracts Leonardo da Vinci, and has a similar but far less notable moment of activity. Parma produces Correggio. Florence, in addition to Michelangelo, has painters to her credit like Fra Bartolommeo, Andrea del Sarto, and Bronzino. In Venice the romance of

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Giorgione and the delicate craft of Bellini, combine to educate Titian, who perfects the technique of oil painting. At no other time is the efflorescence of art in Italy so widespread and so vigorous.

### A.D. 1525-1600

Before the middle of the century Rome, Florence and the rest are exhausted. Venice alone retains her strength, with the mature Titian, Tintoretto, and Paul Veronese to represent her. Finally, however, a new activity starts at Bologna. The idea of combining perfection of form with the splendour of Venetian colour is propagated by the Carracci, who found the Bolognese School of the Eclectics. The Eclectics in turn are succeeded by the Naturalists under the leadership of Caravaggio, and the focus of action is transferred to Rome and to Naples.

### A.D. 1600-1700

Though Rome and Naples remained the chief centres of study, the distinction between the various local styles and schools grew less and less. Italy during the seventeenth century was mostly content to live upon old theories, and to be the training ground for the rest of Europe. So Rubens and Van Dyck from the Netherlands, Velazquez from Spain, and Poussin from France, came to Italy to master their profession.

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A.D. 1700-1800

The Venetian school revives. The great decorator Tiepolo, with Canaletto and Guardi in the field of architectural painting, complete the roll of Italian creative artists.

## CHAPTER III

### *The Origins and Methods of Italian Painting*

THE record of Italian painting during the first twelve centuries of the Christian era is so confused and imperfect, that it is hardly a profitable subject of study except for those who can spend some time in Italy. Yet amid all this confusion two definite forces, two distinct types of work and of thought, can be seen in action, and the task of understanding the later development of Italian art will be considerably simplified, if, from the outset, we have a clear perception of the difference between them.

The older and the stronger of the two is the classical style which Italy borrowed from Greece. Its most important relics are the wall paintings in fresco, such as those preserved at Rome and Naples, and a few works in mosaic. Many of these relics are pure decoration; festoons, garlands and diapers surrounding small panels of figures, landscape, or still-life. But in some cases panels and compositions on a larger scale have survived. In these the figures reflect, often somewhat dimly it is true,

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the grace, the solidity, and the simplicity of classical reliefs. The backgrounds are relatively or entirely plain; the artist's interest being concentrated upon representing and grouping mythological figures, in the dress and style with which Greek sculpture has made us familiar.

The early Christian painters adopted this style without question, using the images of pagan mythology as allegories of the new faith. Orpheus becomes a symbol of Christ; Hermes with the ram becomes the Good Shepherd. These naïve transformations had, of course, to be given up when doctrinal questions assumed importance. As the differences between heresy and orthodoxy were one by one fought out, the subjects and treatment appropriate for religious painting were settled by ecclesiastical authority. The classical style had to adapt itself to these new conditions, and at the same time to face competition with its great rival—Byzantine art. Often it seemed to be overwhelmed, or to have fallen into a decadence from which there could be no revival. Yet it survived the struggle. Pietro Cavallini, a master of the Roman School, and the greatest exponent of the classical style at the end of the thirteenth century, was one of those who painted at Assisi. Under him Giotto learned his craft; and with Giotto the art of Florence begins the great career which culminates in Michelangelo. Those qualities of sculptural solidity and mastery



Assisi, Francesco

Photograph : Al

ROMAN SCHOOL  
ISAAC AND ESAU



## *The Origins and Methods of Italian Painting*

of the human form which gained the Florentines their fame, have thus a pedigree which leads back to classical Greece.

We have already referred to Byzantine art, the one great rival of the classical tradition. It came into being much later, in A.D. 330, when Constantine the Great made Byzantium his capital, under the new name of Constantinople. In that city, while Rome was being sacked and occupied by a succession of conquerors, the Roman Empire maintained its existence for some eleven hundred years. During the whole of that long period Byzantine crafts and craftsmen were finding their way into Western Europe; this penetration being specially active on the occasions when internal dissensions over religious matters, or pressure from external enemies, drove the artisans of the city to seek refuge elsewhere.

From its interest in doctrinal matters, and in the establishment of a fixed standard of religious belief, Byzantium demanded that its art should have a formal and hieratic character. Close connexion with Asia invested that formality with an Oriental richness of colour. The crafts of enamelling and of mosaic in which the Byzantines excelled, were well adapted to the expression of these two qualities; much better indeed than the more summary craft of fresco-painting. It is with

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mosaic alone that we need concern ourselves at the moment.

The Romans had used a mosaic of pieces of coloured marble set in cement, to make patterns on their floors. Occasionally these patterns were expanded into real pictures in stone, like the famous *Battle of Issus* in the Naples museum. More rarely still they were used to decorate walls. In Byzantium the use of mosaic was elaborated by the introduction of little cubes of coloured or gilded glass instead of marble, so that colour effects of the utmost splendour could be readily attained. In the twilight interiors of the churches of Ravenna, Venice, and Rome, the great figures thus constructed stand out from their backgrounds of gold or deep blue with an impressiveness which is not easily forgotten. There is seldom much attempt at realistic presentation. The individual figures may be flat and unsubstantial silhouettes, but the large simplicity of the forms, and the splendour of the colour compel respect and admiration, even if they do not carry complete conviction to our modern eyes.

Such are the two main types of thought and workmanship in which the painting of Renaissance Italy originates. It would be unjust, however, if we did not mention one special contribution of Rome to these early manifestations of art. The Romans could not equal the forms of Greek sculp-



S. Vitale, Ravenna

Photograph : Alinari

BYZANTINE MOSAIC  
THE EMPRESS THEODORA (DETAIL)



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ture, they could only copy them somewhat clumsily. But in the domain of portraiture they were supreme. The busts of the Roman Emperors and their relatives, at the British Museum and elsewhere, have a living and personal quality which is unmatched. The painted portraits, dating from the third century A.D., which have been found in the cemeteries of the Fayûm possess a similar vitality. The specimens in the vestibule of the National Gallery will be familiar to all visitors. They are executed somewhat rudely in the medium of encaustic; a process in which the colours were blended with melted wax. Though commonly used by the painters of classical times, this process was apparently a laborious one. It fell into disuse, and the secret of it was lost.

During the thirteenth century the Church had attained to considerable wealth and power. To consolidate and extend its influence it called in the service of the arts, so that painting and architecture received a great and sustained impetus. Mosaic became too slow and costly a process to supply the demand for pictorial art. The number of masters who could design for it, and the number of workmen trained to set one little cube of glass or marble by another, and so laboriously encrust a whole church interior, was quite unequal to the calls now made upon their specialized craft.

More rapid methods of decoration had to be

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found, and so the ancient practice of fresco-painting was revived. The essential factor in this process is the spreading of a smooth strong plaster over the part of the wall surface to be covered. On this plaster, while it is still damp, the painter washes his colours in, much as does the modern water-colour painter. He must work swiftly or the plaster will dry and cease to be absorbent. He must work surely, because it is almost impossible to correct an error. Each day's painting has thus to be mapped out in advance, and the exact amount of damp plaster required for it laid upon the wall before starting work. No process, in fact, is so well calculated to call out the powers of the artist; first in deciding beforehand exactly what he intends to do, and then in sweeping it in upon the wall, swiftly and certainly, with a breadth of handling and design proportionate to the distance from which the result will finally be viewed. It is to hereditary training in this practice of fresco that the great Italians owe their largeness of style and masterful execution.

With the building of churches and oratories, the need arose for work on a smaller scale; for portable altarpieces and devotional pictures. These were executed usually on prepared panels of wood covered with a fine plaster or "gesso." This plaster was occasionally spread upon a sheet of linen fastened to the panel. The painting upon these panels was

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executed in "tempera," a process in which the colours were mixed or "tempered" with the yolk or the white of eggs. The washes of tempera colours were thin and dried quickly. Substance and strength of tone were obtained by repeating the washes; modelling was obtained by shading with touches of a small brush. The vast majority of Italian pictures on a small scale from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century are executed in this tempera method.

Towards the end of the fifteenth century painters sought more and more for solidity and forceful modelling. This the delicate process of tempera could give them only slowly or not at all, so gradually the use of colours ground in oil crept in. At first they were employed only to add depth of tone and softness of modelling to work which had been started in tempera. Finally they came to be used from the beginning to the end of a picture. Since a tempera beginning was no longer needed, there was no necessity for making a start upon a panel prepared with gesso. Canvas stretched upon a frame was used in its place, as being far more cheap, convenient and portable, especially when the work was of considerable size. So the modern practice of oil painting finally developed.

It is useful, if not essential, to have a clear idea of these various processes. The full glory and gran-

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deur of Byzantine mosaic can only be estimated by studying it on the spot, at Ravenna, at Rome, or at Venice and the neighbouring islands. The modern specimens, in the dome of St. Paul's and elsewhere, are more picturesque in intention, but have not the majestic simplicity of the ancient designs. The pavement in the vestibule at Trafalgar Square is a better example of the way in which the old mosaicists used their materials to build up a fine pattern, without attempting to imitate subtleties of tone and lighting.

With fresco we are more fortunate. Though the Sistine ceiling of Michelangelo, the "Stanze" of Raphael in the Vatican, and the domes by Correggio at Parma, retain an unchallenged grandeur, and though the churches of Florence and one or two other Italian cities hold a sequence of paintings in fresco of extraordinary loveliness, there are a few specimens of the craft in Northern Europe by which we can judge its quality. All visitors to the Louvre will remember the two panels by Botticelli, from the Villa Lemmi which hang on the staircase near the *Victory of Samothrace*. In the National Gallery our *Fall of the Rebel Angels* by Spinello Aretino (1216), *The Return of Odysseus* (911) by Pintoricchio, with the panels by Signorelli and Genga (910 and 3929), will serve to fix the process in our memories.

As to tempera painting we have plenty of speci-

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mens at hand. The four small paintings by Duccio at Trafalgar Square illustrate the simple practice of the earlier masters. In *Christ surrounded by Angels, Patriarchs, Saints and Martyrs* (663) by Fra Angelico we see refinement of drawing and colour carried to perfection. In Botticelli's *Mars and Venus* (915) and Michelangelo's youthful *Madonna and Child with Angels* (809), tempera is employed to gain more powerful effects of modelling and design.

Works in oil are so numerous that we need only notice two or three pictures which represent the process in a transition stage. The most ambitious of these and one of the earliest, is the large *Martyrdom of S. Sebastian* (292) by Pollaiuolo; one of the most beautiful in colour is the *Madonna of the Meadow* (599), from the studio of Bellini. In this we see the superb combination of brilliancy and softness which could be obtained by applying thin glazes of oil paint over a first painting done in tempera, a method responsible also for the glowing tones of Titian's famous *Bacchus and Ariadne* (35). Oil painting always had a tendency to darken somewhat in the course of time, so that most of the later paintings executed entirely in oil are less luminous than the early examples. In these the film of oil is necessarily thinner, and has the cool pale tones of tempera below it to reflect the light, and prevent even the shadows from looking heavy. Painting gained in ease and convenience by giving up tem-

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pera as a foundation; but it lost therewith a brightness and a clarity of colour which cause the paintings of this transition epoch to rank with the most precious products of the human genius.

The earlier paintings on panel were exclusively devotional, taking the form either of altar frontals, or of altarpieces placed on or behind the altar. The most common form of these altarpieces was the "triptych." Here a centre panel, containing usually an image of the Madonna, was flanked by two narrower panels containing the figures of saints,—three panels in all. The side panels might be fitted with hinges, and serve as doors shutting over the centre panel. Duccio's little painting (566) at Trafalgar Square will serve as an example of such a triptych; Margaritone's *Madonna* (564) of an altar-frontal.

Sometimes the altarpiece was on a much more elaborate scale, consisting of many panels and forming a "polyptych." Our "Demidoff" altarpiece by Crivelli (788) is a well-known specimen. At the foot of the ordinary altarpiece, and forming its base, was a ledge or step, the *predella*, decorated in front with small paintings—usually oblong in form. Our Fra Angelico (663) is a fine specimen.

Secular painting during the early fifteenth century was represented by portraits, salvers, and panels to decorate the front and ends of *cassoni*, the elaborate chests which were made for wedding-presents. Usually these were painted by a special group of secondary painters. The more celebrated artists seldom worked upon them. Our salver by Benozzo Gozzoli (591), and Mr. Loyd's cassone panels by Pesellino, are notable exceptions.

## CHAPTER IV

### *The Forerunners: Duccio and Giotto*

THE year 1250 is a convenient date for starting our survey. It was a time of church building all over Italy, and the new churches needed decoration. The great days of Byzantine mosaic were past; the process too was too slow and too costly for all ordinary occasions. Venice, being a wealthy city, might still continue to employ mosaic for a precious shrine like St. Mark's: other communities had to be content with paintings in fresco or on panel. These crafts, following mechanically the style and design of Byzantine mosaic, were naturally restricted in scope, and their formality was not redeemed by such beauties of substance and colour as mosaic introduces.

The well-known *Madonna and Child, with Saints* (564) in the National Gallery by MARGARITONE of Arezzo, is convincing evidence of the stiffness and impoverishment of painting in Italy at this moment. As a work of art it is rather a doleful product, in spite of its general pattern of black and red on a gold background. It is really a sort of

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pious and formal picture-writing, providing the worshipper with a rude image of the Madonna for his veneration, and with a series of crude little illustrations, mostly from the lives of the saints, for his instruction. These scenes were chosen by ecclesiastical authority, and the painter was not expected to deviate from the traditional arrangement. Hence the designs for such subjects as "The Nativity" or "The Crucifixion" became, as it were, stereotyped symbolic patterns, which the humblest intelligence could recognize and comprehend. This was an advantage, no doubt, to the spread of religious knowledge; but its effect upon the artist was deplorable. Deprived of all initiative, he became a mere mechanic, repeating time after time the formula he had been taught, until any faint breath of life which it may originally have possessed was utterly dissipated.

Towards the close of the thirteenth century two men made a great effort to escape from this arid formalism. The elder, the Florentine Cimabue, has left little work that we can quite certainly associate with his hand. Yet his reputation in his own day was great, and as the first patron of Giotto his place in the roll of fame is assured. As to the younger, DUCCIO di Buoninsegna, a Sienese, we are much better informed.

Duccio's most famous work is the large altarpiece painted between 1308 and 1311 for the

Photograph: Anderson

DUCIO

THE MARIES AT THE SEPULCHRE

Siena, Opera del Duomo





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Cathedral at Siena, where the greater part of it is still preserved in the Cathedral Museum. On the back were a number of smaller panels. Several of these have become detached in the course of time, and have found their way into various public and private collections. The National Gallery possesses three of them which, with a little triptych of *The Madonna*, enable us to form an excellent idea of the change which Duccio inaugurated. He made no very radical departure from the traditional Byzantine compositions, but he inspired them with a life that was wholly novel. His figures are no longer stiff and formal symbols; they are genuine human beings. Their faces have charm and character, their gestures are natural and significant. Colour, too, is given a new and overwhelming importance. Sometimes Duccio's harmony is made up of cool, tender tones which anticipate the exquisite art of Fra Angelico. Sometimes he affects a deep and solemn splendour, recalling the finest Byzantine mosaics and enamels; gold being freely used both as a decoration and to suggest a blaze of light. So the marvel and effulgence of *The Transfiguration*, and the tender mystery of the *Annunciation* are brought home to the spectator no less plainly than the facts in the case of *Christ healing the Blind*.

An art which tells its story so plainly, and with so much spiritual and material beauty, might well

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seem a wonder to eyes accustomed only to the gaunt symbolism of Margaritone, and the people of the day might well think that art could go no farther. But elsewhere men's vision was becoming accustomed to symbolism of another kind. Near the city of Pisa were the famous marble quarries of Carrara, upon which the Pisans and their neighbours drew largely for their buildings and sculpture. The Pisan sculptors rapidly rose to repute, Niccolo Pisano leading the way with admirable work on the lines of the classical sarcophagi. His son **GIOVANNI PISANO** shared and surpassed his father's fame. His Gothic veracity and dignity make him the greatest personage in Italian sculpture before Donatello. In Giovanni's hands, the representation of the human figure attains a substance and completeness which Italian painting could not acquire till a century after his death. Florence quickly took the lead in developing the sculptural tradition which the Pisans had founded, and the subsequent character of Florentine painting was largely determined by the close connexion which grew up between her sculptors and her painters.

**CIMABUE**, as Dante records, was the <sup>first</sup> famous name in Florentine art, and was one of the many masters who came in succession to paint at Assisi. The life and work of St. Francis had made an immense appeal to the popular mind. The Franciscan Order glorified his shrine by the erection of

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one church over another. The walls were decorated by three or four generations of painters, so that Assisi became the veritable cradle of Renaissance painting in Italy. Here worked Cimabue, with his youthful fellow-countryman Giotto. Here worked also certain masters of the Roman school, among them Pietro CAVALLINI. Cavallini, as we have seen, was an inheritor of the classical sculptural tradition, and it was in him, rather than in Cimabue, that Giotto found his first inspiration.

The figures of Cimabue, like those of Duccio and the Byzantine masters, might have grandeur of conception, splendour of colour, and expressiveness. From their poses and gestures the spectator could at once understand what they were doing. But in themselves they were not convincing. They were not set firmly on their feet; they had no real stability or substance. They might interest the eye for a moment by their disposition and obvious meaning; but then could arouse only disappointment, because they were mere silhouettes, not solid tangible beings like those which the contemporary sculptors were producing.

To all this unsubstantial presentation the instinct of GIOTTO was adverse. In his recoil and revolt he went to the opposite extreme. His figures do not imitate the sculpture of his own day, or its classical originals; they recall the massive simplicity of primitive monuments and monoliths. Sweeping robes,

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unbroken save for a few shallow folds, encompass their bulky trunks and huge limbs; only when the occasion compels the expression of strong emotion or vigorous movement does Giotto modify this weighty formula. The simplicity of the figures is accompanied and enhanced by a similar simplicity in the background, where hills and trees and buildings are rendered with the broad symbolism of the mediæval miniaturist, against a plain blue sky. Coupled, however, with this passion for volume and mass, went a keen dramatic instinct, and a sense of human character which render Giotto's paintings no less convincing as illustrations than they are satisfying to the eye in virtue of their solidity.

It is important that we should understand quite clearly the change which Giotto brought about. We may do so the more easily, perhaps, if we think of the somewhat similar change which has taken place recently with regard to the painter's vision. Fifty years ago almost everybody was still engaged in the search for some sort of realism. Both figures and landscape were painted as if the vision of the photographic camera was the only standard by which the painter's vision could be judged. Yet to the more acute thinkers of the time this ideal was unsatisfying. The photographic vision involved countless details which were irrelevant or disturbing to pictorial effect. Too often a picture got worse and worse as natural detail was added to



Padua, Arena Chapel

Photograph - Anderson

**GIOTTO**  
**THE VISITATION**



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increase its apparent verisimilitude. The Impressionists and the painters, like Whistler, who were inspired by Japan, sought a way of escape by careful selection. Their selections, in turn, have been succeeded by various new ideals of abstraction and simplification. Most of them inculcate the importance of three-dimensional solidity; sometimes, as with the Cubists, the aim is a pure geometrical symbolism. Giotto's reform was a movement of a similar kind, but because it was never divorced from the common feelings and experience of human life, it was charged with infinitely wider and grander possibilities.

The panel pictures that bear Giotto's name are comparatively few, and do not give us the complete view of his genius which we obtain from studying his frescoes. Of these there are three great groups, at Assisi, Padua, and Florence. At Assisi his youthful work is mingled with that of his contemporaries, his pupils and his forerunners. In the Arena chapel at Padua his compositions and symbolical figures display his full maturity. In the Church of S. Croce at Florence the designs are more elaborate, and have been much repainted, but even the repainting does not conceal their essential grandeur and beauty. For Giotto's work, with all its bigness and simplification of design, is charged with vivid colour, distributed, as we might expect, in broad masses, and so possessing uncommon

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decorative power. How then was it that, with all Giotto's fame, the possibilities of his novel method of work were realized so slowly? For more than sixty years after his death no painter appeared in Florence to carry forward the torch which he had lighted.

I think we may ascribe to two causes the lull, nay, the decline, which followed Giotto's death. The first of these is a very natural one. Giotto's departure from the accepted canons of design and vision was too abrupt and too startling for men of ordinary talent. That superhuman bigness, that overwhelming strength, that austere simplification, were too robust a vintage for their apprehensive palates. So, as is the way with artistic movements all the world over, his followers watered down the strong wine of Giotto's art, adding very often a flavour derived from Siena. Indeed, the rise of the Sienese School and its consequent influence upon art in Florence was the second factor which prevented the lessons taught by Giotto from being more quickly assimilated.

In Siena, Duccio had been worthily succeeded by his pupil SIMONE MARTINI, an artist possessing a rare sense of beauty of line, of colour, of graceful movement and of human expression, that attracted all who came into contact with him. In his hands Byzantine art lost its primitive rigidity, and be-



Siena, Palazzo Pubblico

AMBROGIO LORENZETTI  
PEACE

Photograph Alinari



## *The Forerunners: Duccio and Giotto*

came something supple and gracious, with a new luminosity and splendour of cool colouring. The brothers Pietro and Ambrogio LORENZETTI, and indeed the whole school of Siena, followed in this flowery path, gradually forgetting as they did so the graver problems which the artist has to face. From time to time Sienese like SASSETTA, and in a still later generation MATTEO DI GIOVANNI and FRANCESCO DI GIORGIO, try to assimilate some of the science of form and movement with which the Florentines were occupied, and do so with partial success. But the Sienese School, as a whole, is a sort of æsthetic Lotus-land—a charming back-water in the arts which leads nowhere.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless Sienese influence upon the main current of the arts was not inconsiderable. The sense of rhythmic line and refined colour drift out from Siena towards Florence in the period which followed the death of Giotto, and the resulting mixture of Florentine and Sienese influences during that period provides the critic with some of his most difficult problems. The greatest figure at Florence in this time of transition was ORCAGNA, famed as

<sup>1</sup> The list of attractive Sienese painters is now becoming quite lengthy. Barna, Bartolo di Fredi, Sano di Pietro, Giovanni di Paolo, Vecchietta, Neroccio di Landi, are a few of the names familiar to all collectors and students of the Sienese School. But their undeniable attractiveness is so limited in scope that they do not call for detailed notice here.

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a goldsmith and sculptor as well as a painter. In his painting we find much of the Giottesque feeling for grace of line and colour. It is, however, as a sculptor that he shows his full power, and his little compositions on the famous tabernacle of Or San Michele at Florence are among the gravest and grandest products of the time.

The middle of the fourteenth century is thus a moment of comparative repose in the arts. If the example of Giotto was not being followed up with the vigour that we might have expected, the new elements introduced into Italian art by the Sienese were ultimately to do great service. By themselves, as was the case at Siena, this grace of line, this spirituality, this splendour of colour were bound to end in languor and empty prettiness. But when wedded to the masculine vigour and science of the Florentines, they were invaluable in preserving that vigour from swelling into mere brute force, and that science from stiffening into pedantry. We have only to look around us to-day to realize how great is the risk of such sterilization when art falls into the hands of theorists. Indeed one of the chief uses of studying the art of the past, is the light which it throws upon the art of the present time, and in the Florence of the fifteenth century we shall find almost as much theory and science as our modern critics thrust upon us. It is well sometimes to remember that these never have been the sole ele-

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ments of great art. In that, from first to last, strength and science have been accompanied by more gracious qualities, such as those by which the Sienese school attained and maintains its attraction for men.

Several of the Florentines who worked in the interval between Giotto and Masaccio were men of some individual talent. First comes Bernardo Daddi, who proves himself, in the Highnam polyptych, to be a fine colourist and designer. Agnolo Gaddi, a son of Giotto's pupil and assistant, Taddeo Gaddi, displays a similar charm of colour (due no doubt to Sienese influence), in our *Coronation of the Virgin* (568). At the National Gallery we can also study the more forcible Spinello Aretino (Nos. 276 and 1216), and Lorenzo Monaco, whose mastery of fluent rhythm shows to singular advantage in his little predella panels, such as Nos. 2862 and 4062. Lastly we must remember Masolino da Panicale, the teacher and colleague of Masaccio, a lively, variable but rather unsubstantial personage. His most important authentic works are the frescoes at Castiglione d'Olona, some twenty miles north of Milan. Over other works attributed to him, including his share in the famous frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel (see pp. 44-46), criticism still hesitates.

## CHAPTER V

### *The Founders of the Florentine School*

WE have seen what were the three forces which combined, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, to raise Italian art from the grave of a dead mediævalism. There was Giovanni Pisano, the first of the great Italian sculptors. There was Giotto, the first of the great Florentine painters, and there was Simone Martini, with his Sienese contemporaries and successors, to remind men of the attractions of rhythmical line, splendour of colour, and of spiritual beauty. These forces were so novel and so potent that the whole century was spent in assimilating them. Thus it is not till about the year 1410 that a fresh advance begins, and continues thenceforward without a halt till it reaches its climax with Michelangelo. As with the earlier movement, we may recognize a group of three forces to which this new departure was indebted for its vigour. Again there was a very great sculptor, Donatello. Again there was a champion of colour and spiritual beauty, Fra Angelico. Again there was a painter, Masaccio, who took up the tradition of Giotto, and

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infused into it so much new vigour that, eighty years or more after his death, his works were still regarded as a necessary part of a young artist's education.

Of the three, DONATELLO'S was the most extraordinary genius. Long training as a stonecutter made him a master of the technicalities of his craft. His bent was at first realistic. Then the study of classical sculpture inspired him with new ambitions. With singular daring and insatiable curiosity he explored one avenue of artistic expression after another, leaving his mark upon them all. With the Gothic dignity of Giovanni Pisano he blends the individual character and spirit of portraiture. Classical art is for him something far more than an imitation of the ordinary Greco-Roman statues and reliefs. He emulates the delicacy of Greek bronzes, and more than once seems to draw his inspiration from the Asiatic side of the art. In his reliefs he will experiment at one time with pictorial effects, with elaborate compositions and the suggestion of atmosphere; at another he will recapture the delicate qualities which the Sienese had introduced into painting. He works with the same ease on a large scale as on a small scale; in marble or in bronze. The equestrian statue of Gattamelata at Padua, and the bronzes by the altar of the Church of S. Antonio in the same city, will serve as proofs. But the great characteristic of all these varied achievements is their intense vitality, their convincing humanity,

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whether in joy or sorrow, in vigorous motion or at rest. The effect of so much force and such variety upon Italian art was irresistible. Not only did it compel attention by its potency, but it proved that the channels of possible artistic expression were far more numerous than either the mediæval sculptors, or those who were studying the remnants of classical art, had ever dreamed. Breadth of outlook, even more than power, was the lesson which Donatello's example taught to Italy.

Fra ANGELICO was a man of narrower talent. Coming in the direct line of descent from Giotto, by way of Orcagna who influenced his early style, he learned much from the example of a younger man, the short-lived Masaccio, and left a mass of work which is not only unique in character, but from first to last of singularly high technical quality. He is the chief prophet in Italy of the beauty of holiness; but he was a great artist too. His figures have mass and substance. His designs are always charming, even when, as in our National Gallery panels, they are hardly more than a formal colour pattern. Sometimes, as in the frescoes of *The Transfiguration* and *The Maries at the Sepulchre*, in his Convent of S. Marco at Florence, they attain extraordinary grandeur. If in range of types, of action and of expression Angelico is limited by his devout temper, the singleness of that devotion makes his simplest gesture convincing.



*Florence, S. Marco*

*Photograph : Anderson*

**FRA ANGELICO**  
**THE TRANSFIGURATION**



## *The Founders of the Florentine School*

His supreme quality is that of colour. No other painter has employed tones of such purity, has harmonized them with such refinement, or has contrasted them when the occasion demands with greater force and liveliness. For with Angelico's devotion there went a certain blitheness of spirit, which delighted in the freshest, the most vivid, and the most dainty embellishments which his fancy could devise for the saintly subjects which were his concern. Though this innocent delight in lowness of colour is evident in his noble frescoes in Florence and at Rome, it is most conspicuous in his paintings on panel. *The Coronation of the Virgin* in the Louvre is a superb example, but those who examine the still more accessible *Christ surrounded by Angels* (663) at Trafalgar Square, will find in its details countless examples of colour-motives and colour-contrasts such as they will find in no other painting in the whole Gallery. These pictures, however, are formal compositions. The full range of Angelico's fancy and variety of a designer can only be estimated by seeing the numerous panels at Florence, where episodes from the life of Christ and of the Saints are treated by him and his assistants with a spirit and beauty which left their mark upon all subsequent painting of the kind in Florence.

But Angelico's influence upon subsequent art was slight compared with that of a much younger man, who died many years before him at the age of

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twenty-six or twenty-seven. As Vasari truly says, "with regard to the good manner of painting we are indebted above all to MASACCIO." Not even Donatello taught Florentine painters so much as this short-lived youth, who possessed by instinct that sense of solid form that was Giotto's, but extended its application to the nude figure and to more active movement, allying with it a wonderful working knowledge of perspective. Florence at this time was largely preoccupied with the study of perspective as an aid to the artist, and one Florentine at least, Paolo Uccello, carried his enthusiasm for pictorial geometry so far as to imperil his art. But Masaccio's knowledge of perspective, derived it would seem from his friend the great architect Brunelleschi, was not of this pedantic nature. He appears to have assimilated the principles of the science with the same native ease with which he mastered the general construction and appearance of the human figure, and indeed of all that he set himself to paint. For in his famous fresco of *The Tribute Money* there is a range of mountains in the background which, as Ruskin pointed out long ago, is the first piece of real mountain drawing in ancient art, and it is not too much to say that by Masaccio's death the world of painting suffered an irreparable loss.

For the relics of his genius are pitifully few. First comes the series of frescoes in the Brancacci



*Florence, Carmine*

Photograph : Anderson

MASACCIO

THE EXPULSION FROM PARADISE



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Chapel in the Church of the Carmine at Florence, upon which Masaccio was engaged at the time of his death. There is also one fresco in S. Maria Novella in the same city. The former paintings are much battered and restored; the latter is damaged and darkened. Almost, the only other indubitable relics are portions of an altarpiece, of which the centre panel representing the *Madonna and Child*, is in the National Gallery (3046).

From it we may learn some of Masaccio's characteristics. The whole is conceived as a monument, which by the artful use of perspective is presented on a colossal scale, as we see from the slope of the wings on each side of the throne, which tower up like great buttresses. And the brooding figure of the Madonna is as full of weight and volume under her ample draperies as is the figure of the Child, or the throne itself; indeed the pale flesh tones give the figures something of the effect of carved stone. In the frescoes of the Brancacci Chapel we have the same feeling of weight and volume, but the analogy to sculpture is less rigid. The figures are living people, not coloured statues, and in the celebrated *Expulsion from Paradise* Adam and Eve have the heroic bulk and heavy build of primeval humanity, beings created long before canons of ideal beauty were thought of. For the abiding characteristic of Masaccio's best work is its apparent innocence of anatomical science. He gets mass and movement

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in his figures by sheer feeling and observation, whereas by others such qualities were gained, if they were gained at all, by incessant and precise study. Such study indeed, was the preoccupation of the next two or three generations in Florence. Meanwhile, these frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel became the training school in which all the most famous sculptors and painters learned their craft. Vasari gives a long list of them. It begins with Fra Angelico, and includes Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Raphael, who, as Vasari rightly points out, "owed to this chapel the beginning of his beautiful manner." What other painter can bring such a company of witnesses to testify to his genius?

The gifts of Paolo UCCELLO, Masaccio's contemporary, were different. In him the man of science and the artist were so combined that the science often seems to overbalance the art. So, at least, it seemed to his contemporaries, and to Vasari in the next century. In our own day the scientific side of art is once more in favour, and Uccello's attitude meets with more sympathy. His time was spent, so we hear, in puzzling over the application of perspective to the arts, whereby the painter might, by sheer mathematical knowledge, reconstruct on his wall or panel the whole world visible or invisible. Exploring continually the perspective of spirals and other complicated forms, he could not help making



London, National Gallery

Copyright : National Gallery

UCCELLO

DETAIL FROM "THE ROUT OF S. ROMANO"



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a display of his knowledge in his painting. Our well-known battlepiece in the National Gallery, the companion pictures in Paris and in the Uffizi, with the frescoes illustrating the story of Noah in the Church of S. Maria Novella at Florence, all bear witness to this failing.

But there is a germ of artistic excellence in Uccello's method. When he translates men, horses, trees, and hills into geometrical terms, so that they look rather like the wooden models in a box of toys or a Noah's Ark, the translation has one singular merit. It brings into harmony the various parts of the picture, so that, with all their individual oddities, they make a quite admirable decorative pattern. And they possess substance too; though it has not the monumental weight of Giotto's, nor the living variety and plasticity of Masaccio's. Uccello was also a delightful craftsman. His sense of colour, in particular, was highly original, and a close examination of his big picture at Trafalgar Square will show what unique and stimulating quality he obtains from glazing transparent colours over silver foil, and interchanging them with a heraldic sense of vivid contrast. Several of the profile portraits which rank among the most exquisite products of the early Renaissance, must also be credited to Uccello. The profile of the fair-haired boy in our picture shows what charm and delicacy this quaint genius had at his com-

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mand, when he was not obsessed by his scientific theories.

With Uccello we may associate his younger contemporary Domenico Veneziano, and Domenico's great pupil Piero della Francesca, by whom in the next generation, the mathematics of Uccello are nobly justified. The genius of Andrea dal CASTAGNO was very different. We know now that he was not the murderer of Domenico Veneziano, as Vasari thought him to be, but his spirit is haughty and formidable, his handling almost militant in its power. Of his few surviving works the most important are the frescoes in the Convent of S. Apollonia at Florence. The majority suffer from the desire to be forcible at all costs, but one or two of the statuesque full-length figures, such as those of Farinata degli Uberti (the leader of the Ghibellines whom Dante meets in Hell), and of the Cumæan Sibyl, combine so much dignity with their strength that we feel we are in a really great artistic presence. Some of this grandeur we can realize from our little *Crucifixion* in the National Gallery (1138), with its stern design and iron-grey tone, its tragic expanse of darkened country, and the suppressed passion in the solemn figures above and below.

Now that we have considered Donatello, Angelico, and Masaccio, the three great figures who introduce the great development of art in fifteenth-century



Florence, S Apollonia

Photograph Alinari

CASTAGNO  
FARINATA DEGLI UBERTI



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Florence, together with Uccello and Castagno who contributed to the new movement, we must pause for an instant to consider what the aims of that movement were, and the conditions in which it prospered. First we must recognize that men's minds all over Europe were astir. The Arabs had brought alchemy with them, and in the search for the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life had laid the foundations of chemistry. They brought mathematics too, and revived an interest in Aristotle. This led to the discussions of the schoolmen, and a general tendency to ask questions even about the orthodox beliefs. They brought in, also, the use of paper. Printing followed, and therewith the diffusion of knowledge, and of the Greek and Latin classics. Travel and the compass contributed their share to the widening of man's mental horizon. He ceased to be content with the intellectual food of which the Church during the Middle Ages had been the single dispenser. So the narrow round in which mediæval art had moved was rapidly enlarged, until the events of the day and of pagan mythology came to be accepted as subjects for art, no less appropriate, and to many more amusing and stimulating, than the sequence of pious subjects to which the Byzantine artist had been restricted.

And the means for gratifying artistic feeling were no longer confined to the Church. Trade all over Europe had revived, and many of the trading cities

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were not only more or less independent politically, but were important financial centres. In Italy, Florence and Venice were thus conspicuous, and Florence contained several families, notably that of the Medici, with whom the encouragement of art, whether from natural taste or from policy, came to be a fixed tradition. The powerful trade guilds and the ecclesiastical corporations joined in competition for the best artists and craftsmen, so that while in almost all the Italian cities there was a steady demand for architects, sculptors and painters, Florence having one of the longest purses, an extraordinary supply of artistic talent at hand, and the quarries of Carrara not very far away, fared best of all.

The Mediæval Church teaching had inculcated a certain contempt for the human body. With the spread of knowledge this prejudice weakened, while the expressive power of the nude figure was brought home to residents in Italy by the relics of classical sculpture which building operations were continually unearthing. The Roman prelates, and wealthy families like the Medici at Florence, took pride in collecting these antiques, and their palaces thus became recognized centres of study for artists and scholars. The example of Donatello led painters to aim at infusing into their art some of the life and movement which they found in his work. The figures of Giotto, trammelled for the most part with

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long heavy robes, could not satisfy this feeling. The great nudes of Masaccio pointed the way to more vigorous action, and a no less convincing sense of solid form.

Why is it that the human figure in action is so expressive? Why is it that in its loftier manifestations, as in Michelangelo's Sistine ceiling, the effect upon us is so stimulating and so permanent? Is it, as some have thought, that we unconsciously identify ourselves with the painted image; that we join in the dancer's rhythmic motion, in the struggles of the fighting man, or in the flight of the angel? If so, we get all these heightened sensations of vigorous life without any of the fatigue which the real exertion would entail. A simpler theory refers our pleasure to the instructive craving for rhythmical stimulus, which leads the child and the savage to delight in dancing or decorative work, added to the thrill which most of us experience as we watch mighty forces at issue, in some storm or flood, or when a heavy sea is breaking. But whatever the psychological origin, the fact remains that the attentive spectator does derive a keen sense of pleasure from a painting of the human figure which convincingly suggests its weight and volume, its physical strength, and its capacity for rhythmical and significant action. These ideals of volume, of strength, of rhythmical and significant movement, are the main preoccupation of the greater minds

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among the Florentine painters of the fifteenth century, with the result that the expressive possibilities of the human figure were extended to a degree of which even the Greeks had never dreamed.

## CHAPTER VI

### *The Florentines of the Fifteenth Century*

HITHERTO our road has been plain and straightforward. But towards the middle of the fifteenth century the tracks divide, and are crossed and joined by so many other paths that no simple guide-post will serve us. Nevertheless, if we remember that the majority of the able craftsmen in central Italy came into contact with Florence during this period, or learned the best part of their business in that city, we may not unfairly treat as Florentine, in essence, a number of painters who were born or worked elsewhere. And even among the native Florentines there were wide variations in taste and in practice. Naturally, the painters who advanced the scientific side of their art are the important links in the chain of development. Yet several others by talents and attractions of a very different order obtained a fame so great that they cannot be overlooked, even in a brief survey like this. It will be simplest, perhaps, to deal first with this group and their associates, and then treat as a separate and distinct group the men whose know-

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ledge and research lead up to the triumphant culmination of Florentine art in the person of Michelangelo.

First in point of date and of attractiveness comes **Fra FILIPPO LIPPI**. The story of his life, and his marriage to the nun Lucrezia Buti, is reflected in the character of his art; it is essentially human, full of observation of the delicate beauty of young women and the roguish charm of children. Of the science all about him he uses just so much as suits his convenience. He is an adequate draughtsman, and a clever designer of simple subjects. But his great gift is that of colour. Fra Angelico was a colourist in the grand manner, delighting in the broad opposition of pure and definite masses. In Filippo Lippi we meet for the first time with broken tones, with colours that are no longer positive hues, but have to be described by words like "powder blue," "mulberry," or "plum colour." There is indeed something of the lusciousness of ripe fruit about his most characteristic works, which allied to their essential humanity gives them a perpetual charm. Our two lunettes in the National Gallery (666 and 667) will give a fair idea of these qualities, but not of the loveliness of one or two of his Madonnas in the Florentine Galleries. His most important work is a series of frescoes in the Cathedral at Prato, now much injured; and in the same

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place is a *Death of St. Bernard*, darkened but still impressive. Among his pupils was PESELLINO, the painter of the large altarpiece in the National Gallery (727), of which the various portions have gradually been reunited. The last fragment came quite recently from the Imperial Collection at Berlin.

Pesellino died young; his pictures in consequence perhaps enjoy a slightly excessive valuation in virtue of their rarity. Benozzo GOZZOLI, on the other hand, lived to a good old age, and was the most popular of the pupils of Fra Angelico. When still under that master's spell, he proved himself a painter of some capacity and liveliness, as our engaging salver in the National Gallery (591) representing the *Rape of Helen* will indicate. Later he lost both his humour and his taste, becoming responsible for a number of altarpieces which have a kind of brassy mechanical brightness, but that is all. His most familiar and important work is the series of frescoes in the Chapel of the Riccardi Palace at Florence, representing the *Procession of the Magi*, a very pretty piece of decoration into which numerous portraits of his patrons the Medici and other contemporaries are introduced. It is a pity that Benozzo did not devote himself more often to these gay and fanciful subjects, instead of painting altarpieces about which he was clearly indifferent.

The reader will from time to time hear the name of BALDOVINETTI mentioned, although the

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number of works that can be ascribed to him with absolute certainty is exceedingly small. He was famous in his day for his scientific study of painting mediums, and his experiments seem to have resulted in the rapid decay or disappearance of all his important efforts. His ruined fresco of *The Nativity* in SS. Annunziata at Florence is the most conspicuous of these relics. Our spirited *Portrait of a Lady* (758) in the National Gallery, if it be his, as there is some reason to think, shows that in this vein at least Baldovinetti was far from despicable. Uccello and Domenico Veneziano, with Piero della Francesca and others in the next generation, are credited with profile portraits of a similar type, which count among the most delightful products of Renaissance art. We may regret that this fashion for profile portraits has gone out, perhaps from the mistaken idea that they are easy things to paint. In the case of young and attractive people, the profile often reveals a spirit and character which are lost in the rounded contours of a full-face view. And in the case of the portrait we are discussing, it is amusing to see how Baldovinetti has emphasized the keen humour of the eye and the mouth, by the lively serpentine quality of the hair and the sharp spinous palmetto ornament on the dress.

It is, however, with Baldovinetti's pupil Domenico GHIRLANDAJO, that portraiture takes a more prominent place. Ghirlandajo was a typical Floren-



Florence, S. Maria Novella

Photograph : Anderson

GHIRLANDAJO

GIOVANNA TORNABUONI. DETAIL FROM "THE VISITATION"



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tine craftsman, well-trained, prosperous, and the head of a famous studio, in which for awhile the young Michelangelo learned drawing. But Ghirlandajo himself was no great genius. His pictures on panel are mere capable aggregates of motives which others had invented; his big frescoes in S. Trinita and S. Maria Novella at Florence are full of irrelevant detail, and sadly disappointing in general effect from the poverty of their colouring. But one of the most persistent irrelevances, the introduction into religious scenes of processions of people of the day dressed in contemporary costume, reveals Ghirlandajo's real bent. These portraits are admirable. Drawn with firm outlines and the utmost simplicity, they are full of living character, whether they depict the charms of by-gone ladies like Ginevra de' Benci and Giovanna Tornabuoni, or the sterner features of men. Of the former type our *Costanza de' Medici* at Trafalgar Square (2490) will serve as an illustration. Of Ghirlandajo's male portraits none is perhaps so touching as that in the Louvre (1322), where an old man, his face disfigured by a growth on the nose, bends lovingly over a little boy who beams up at him, unconscious of his ugliness.

For FILIPPINO Lippi, the son of Fra Filippo and the nun Lucrezia Buti, it is possible to have a sneaking affection. His large frescoes in S. Maria Novella at Florence and S. Maria Sopra Minerva

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in Rome, may be confused, crowded and over-elaborated; elsewhere he may often seem to be an invertebrate imitator of better men. Indeed, all through his life Filippino fluttered, as it were, from one source of artistic inspiration to another. Sometimes, when he is associated with his master Botticelli, he becomes almost indistinguishable from his teacher; usually the effort of any important composition proves too heavy a burden for him. But he inherited his father's feeling for human beauty, though what was refinement with Fra Filippo changes, with the son, into hectic delicacy. Our *Angel Adoring* (927) in the National Gallery, and the Madonna fresco at the street corner in Prato, with other single figures and simple designs, illustrate this attractiveness. Our *Madonna with SS. Jerome and Dominic* (293) is one of his very finest and most original works, in which Filippino has invested hints from Leonardo da Vinci and others with a solemnity worthy of some great Chinese religious painter.

A few lines must suffice for PIERO DI COSIMO, that engaging, versatile and whimsical story-teller. Had he lived in our own day he would have been the perfect illustrator for books of fairy-tales; his sympathy with satyrs and centaurs and imaginary monsters being expressed with childlike directness, and often with quite delightful colour. His portraits, too, are sometimes excellent. Our *Death of*

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*Procris* (698) in the National Gallery is one of his brightest and most typical pictures. He is, however, a pleasant by-product of the art of the day, which was not usually so fanciful or so playful, rather than one of those who had an influence upon the future.

At this point we may conveniently consider Pietro PERUGINO, who, though Umbrian by birth and residence, received part of his training in Florence. In spite of the fact that he was the dominant influence upon the youthful Raphael; in spite of his technical accomplishment, his pleasing colour, his careful workmanship, and the serene devotional feeling which his paintings excite, it is doubtful whether Perugino's work would have stood the test of time as it has done, but for one redeeming quality. For it must be admitted that his figures are often lackadaisical and flaccid, that his gestures and graces and smiles are always the same, and that even his colour is too uniformly sweet, so that compared with the real creators of his age he is almost a weakling, except occasionally, or as a portrait painter. But in common with others of his Umbrian fellow-countrymen, like the gay PINTORICCHIO, and like the sentimental Bolognese painter FRANCIA, Perugino had an eye for the airy, undulating distances which stretch away from the Italian hills. This sense of space redeems nearly all his work from triviality. His figures are

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seen under a vast dome of veritable sky, while behind them gentle green valleys sweep gradually down to the distant blue of lake or plain. Our altarpiece in the National Gallery (288) contains one of these vistas, as well as some of Perugino's most careful figure painting. But it is in alliance with architecture that this quality shows best. At Munich, the Virgin appears to St. Bernard under an arched colonnade, and at the end of it the eye wanders out into a landscape of the most restful loveliness. In his great fresco in the Vatican, representing the *Charge to St. Peter*, a wide expanse of pavement leads the eye away for several hundred yards, past a great building with a dome, to the end of a platform, where the ground falls away and we have glimpses of hill-tops sloping down into some vast far-off valley. And no one who has seen his *Crucifixion* in Santa Maria Maddalena dei Pazzi at Florence, will ever forget that vision between the arches, of tumbled hills, tall trees and a sky of such height and magnitude as no other artist has attained. Perugino indeed, by instinct, did for landscape what the Florentines of the day, with all their efforts and knowledge, had just failed to do, and so for his suggestion of light and air and space he deserves to occupy a niche of his own.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The pious Benedetto Bonfigli, Raphael's father Giovanni Santi, the melancholy Niccoló da Foligno, and Perugino's pupil, Lo Spagna, are other Umbrians of some little note. None, however,



Florence. S. M. Medallona. by Perugino

D. C. Heath & Co.

**PERUGINO**  
**THE VIRGIN WITH S. BERNARD**



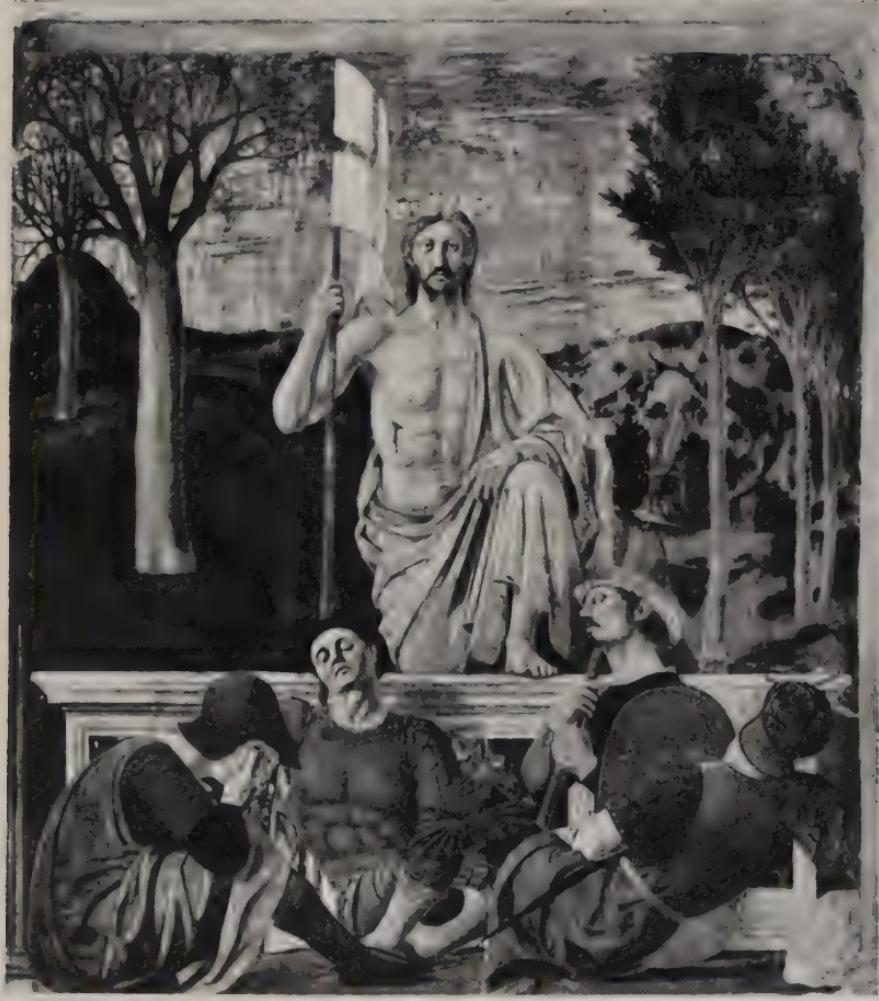
## *The Florentines of the Fifteenth Century*

We may now resume the main road of our inquiry, and consider the little group of men who built up the science of painting in and round Florence. The connecting link between the old generation and the new is Piero della FRANCESCA. Piero was not a Florentine by birth, but comes into the Florentine orbit as the assistant of Domenico Veneziano, a student of the geometry and perspective of Uccello, and one strongly impressed with the sense of form which we find in Masaccio. As we have seen, our *Madonna* by Masaccio has some of the quality of a monument. This monumental character Piero developed till his personages acquire an impassive marmoreal calm, superhuman, untouched, like the Gods of Lucretius, by affection, sympathy, or passion. Most painters aim at some sort of appeal to the spectator. Piero fascinates by his superb disdain of all such appeals. With him we pass into the company of beings from another sphere, untroubled by our petty emotions.

This very individual outlook upon the world, Piero presents with a knowledge of mathematics unequalled in his day, with a superb use of cool, austere colour, a sense of spacious design such as none had possessed before him, and a curiosity as to effects of light and aerial perspective which make equalled Gentile da Fabriano in influence, or Lorenzo di Viterbo in genius. This short-lived artist is known only by one set of frescoes in his native town, but they are masterly.

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him one of the pioneers of landscape. His greatest achievement is the series of frescoes in the Church of S. Francesco at Arezzo, illustrating the *Story of the True Cross*. Of these *The Vision of Constantine*, a night scene with the emperor asleep in his tent, is perhaps the most remarkable from the historical standpoint, because here for the first time a night effect is treated with complete success on a large scale. London is fortunate in possessing two of Piero's most important and typical panel paintings, the *Baptism* (665) and the *Nativity* (908), compositions which in their power are rivalled only by the fresco of the *Resurrection* in his native town Borgo San Sepolcro. In them the spectator will find all the characteristics of which I have spoken, and if he is interested in the geometry of design, can work out the system of contrasts between rectangles and inverted **S** forms on which the *Nativity* is built up. In a panel painting at Urbino he indulges in pure mathematics. The subject is nothing but a circular temple on a platform, flanked by two rows of buildings receding in perspective; but so convincing is the spacing, that Perugino borrowed the motive, thereby investing his *Charge to Saint Peter* in the Vatican with its exceptional grandeur. As a portrait-painter, too, Piero was inferior to none of his contemporaries. The well-known likenesses of the Duke and Duchess of Urbino, in the Uffizi Gallery at Florence, with their allegorical and landscape



Borgo San Sepolcro

Photograph : Anderson

PIERO DELLA FRANCESCA  
THE RESURRECTION



## *The Florentines of the Fifteenth Century*

accompaniments, will serve as evidence; and if we could still believe that the famous profile portrait of a lady in the Poldi-Pezzoli museum at Milan were by Piero's hand, we should be able to think that, for once, his austere eyes had succumbed to youthful human beauty.

Two pupils, MELOZZO da Forli and Luca Signorelli, do honour to Piero's teaching. Unluckily but few specimens of Melozzo's handiwork survive. The panels in Berlin and in our National Gallery (755 and 756), from the Library at Urbino, were no doubt designed by Melozzo; in them we can see the reflection of Piero's statuesque temper. But the execution is generally held to be that of Melozzo's Flemish colleague at Urbino, Justus of Ghent. At Rome, however, in addition to an imposing fresco in the Vatican Gallery, there are certain fragments in the Inner Sacristy of S. Peter's which leave no doubt as to Melozzo's power. The chief figures are soaring angels with musical instruments. Their robust substance, their upward movement, and their spiritual rapture are presented with so much knowledge, grandeur, and fiery inspiration, as to indicate that Melozzo's genius was far greater than his repute.

Luca SIGNORELLI, on the other hand, never lacked fame. Not only was he one of the grandest and most original masters of his time, but he was a prolific worker and always full of honourable

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employment. His immense energy found its chief outlet in the treatment of the nude, which he handled with a freedom, a substance, and a command over rapid and complicated movement which had no parallel till the days of Michelangelo. His figures may not show the precise knowledge of the anatomist so clearly as do those of Pollaiuolo; they have not Leonardo's supple refinement. Perhaps they owe some of their bigness and rude power to Signorelli's rustic ancestry; but as to the power there can be no doubt. And this bigness is not confined to the nude. Signorelli invests the draped figure with a similar breadth and grandeur, as our *Circumcision* (1128) at Trafalgar Square will prove. No master indeed has a larger sense of design, when he pleases. Some of his circular Madonna pieces, such as those in the Uffizi and at Munich, are particularly majestic. Like all profuse and creative tempers, Signorelli is unequal, sometimes overcrowding his compositions, often becoming dusky and fulvous in his colour. But we forget these inequalities in the presence of such cataclysmic products as the frescoes in the Cathedral at Orvieto representing *The Last Judgment*, or that inspired vision of the Gods making music on Olympus by moonlight which we see in the *Pan* at Berlin. It is pleasant to think of Signorelli himself as Vasari saw him—an old man, gentle and courteous, who said to his future biographer, then only eight years



Rome, S. Peter's

Photograph : Anderson

**MELOZZO DA FORLI**  
**ANGEL MUSICIAN**



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old, "Mind your lessons, little kinsman," and then bound a piece of jasper round the boy's neck as a charm against nose-bleeding.

The Florentine Andrea del VERROCCHIO presents a more difficult problem. Trained as a goldsmith, he learns the arts of sculpture in marble, of bronze casting, and of painting. He is also known as a mechanician, a mathematician, and a musician, and as head of one of the most famous of Florentine studios, where Perugino, Lorenzo di Credi, and Leonardo da Vinci worked under him. Of all these arts and accomplishments, sculpture came first; indeed between Donatello and Michelangelo there was no sculptor to equal him. But the diversity of Verrocchio's gifts is accompanied by an equal diversity of taste. Among his works at Florence, where he must be studied, the fountain figure of the baby with a dolphin, shows his playfulness. His bronze *David* and his marble bust of a lady show his grave sense of beauty and character. The marble *lavabo* in the sacristy of S. Lorenzo, the bronze Medicean sarcophagus, and his master-work, the equestrian statue of Bartolommeo Colleoni at Venice, reveal a proud and martial temper.

All these manifestations of Verrocchio's art are marked by a sense of rhythm appropriate to their subject matter; lightsome, refined or triumphant, as the occasion demands. His rare drawings have the same rhythmic quality. But in the only painting

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which we can attribute to him with absolute certainty, the *Baptism* in the Academy at Florence, this sense of rhythm is much less marked. Indeed, the general effect is so dry and laborious (for all the effort towards atmosphere and sunlight in the landscape) that we can easily believe Vasari's story about it—how the angel kneeling on the left was painted by the boy Leonardo, and was so patently superior to the rest of the picture that Verrocchio would never again set his hand to painting.

What then are we to think of the paintings that pass either as Verrocchio's own, or as coming from his studio? As a group they have none of the characteristics of his sculpture, except a very high standard of craftsmanship. I think we must regard them as studio products, for which Verrocchio may have furnished sketches, but studio products carried out by such a group of talented young men, and under the supervision of so scrupulous a master, as to rank with the best Florentine work of the time. Our *Madonna with Angels* (296) in the National Gallery is one of the finest of them, and I have given reasons elsewhere for thinking that the tree-crowned hill to the left, and some other parts of the picture, may have been painted by the youthful Leonardo. We may see Leonardo's hand again in the Angel of the Uffizi *Annunciation*; the Madonna shows no less clearly the style of Lorenzo di Credi. It is for his influence upon others, no-



Orvieto Duomo

Photograph: Anderson

SIGNORELLI  
DETAIL FROM "THE LAST JUDGMENT"



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tably upon Leonardo da Vinci, and for his masterly achievements as a sculptor, that Verrocchio's name and fame will survive.

Verrocchio, in common with all the scholarly Florentines of his day, owed much to Antonio POLLAIUOLO, who, with his brother Piero, devoted his life to the study of artistic anatomy. For the first time the muscles and structure of the human body were minutely examined with a view to their bearing upon æsthetic expression, and our big painting *The Martyrdom of S. Sebastian* (292) is the chief remaining monument of that research. As studies of the various stresses and strains to which exertion can subject the human figure, it would be difficult to surpass the two crossbowmen in the foreground. But the group as a whole is awkward; it has no unifying rhythm, and so must be ranked with the products of science rather than of art. The landscape background with its wide prospect is also a remarkable effort at realism, but it lacks light and air as much as the figures lack rhythm. On a smaller scale, however, Pollaiuolo could blend rhythm with his knowledge much more happily. His *Hercules* panels in the Uffizi, and our little *Apollo* and *Daphne* (928) in the National Gallery, show him to be an admirable artist, not unworthy of his great reputation. He was also a fine sculptor and worker in metal, a famous draughtsman and engraver, and the proprietor of a large

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studio, the head-quarters of the scientific study of the human body upon which the supreme achievement of the Florentines was founded. With Pol- laiuolo indeed the stage of pioneering comes to an end, and we reach a generation of painters each of whom, in his way, develops his talent to a point from which no further advance is possible. One of these we may now consider.

“The greatest artist of lineal design that Europe has ever had”: such is the phrase in which a justly famous critic summed up Alessandro Filepepi, commonly known as BOTTICELLI. At first you may think the words extravagant, or at least a partial estimate. Indeed, this fanciful and often rather melancholy mystic has charmed so many by the dreamy beauty of his feminine types, and by his poetic temperament, that they have been apt to overlook and to underestimate the vigorous artistic energy underneath the outward appearance.

For in all Botticelli’s typical work he uses line with a sense of its rhythmical quality which makes it seem a living thing. This vital quality may be found in a single lock of hair, in a single fold of drapery, as well as in the poise of a whole figure or the arrangement of a whole group. Botticelli’s line moves with the liteness of a serpent or the swiftness of a flame, and this rhythmic quality, when once it is apprehended, is a thing which haunts the mind for ever. Fortunately, too, it is a quality



Florence, Uffizi

Photograph : Alinari

POLLAUOLO  
HERCULES AND THE HYDRA



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independent of colour, so that we can be thrilled by it in a large-scale photograph almost as powerfully as by the original work. In a more limited way this living rhythmical quality is found in the finest works of Verrocchio; the absence of it, as we have seen, makes some of Pollaiuolo's most elaborate efforts seem lifeless. The drawings of Leonardo da Vinci also possess it to an uncommon degree, but with Leonardo the issue is apt to be confused by psychological or scientific considerations. With Botticelli linear rhythms come into being simply from their creator's delight in them.

The amount of his painting is considerable in itself, and is greatly augmented by the mass of pictures, based upon his designs and cartoons, which his assistants produced to supply the popular demand. Any brief summary of Botticelli's achievement must therefore omit much which really deserves notice. As the pupil of Fra Filippo Lippi he was apprenticed to the current devotional painting of the time. Then coming to Florence he is attached to the Pollaiuoli, and acquires that firmness of figure drawing which henceforward is typical of him. Our oblong *Adoration of the Magi* (592) in the National Gallery, and the rather more mature *tondo* of the same subject (1033), illustrate these early influences.

Then follows a period of some twenty years in which, under the patronage of the Medici and

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others, his finest work was done. His best portraits, his allegories of *Spring* (The "Primavera"), of *Pallas* and *The Birth of Venus* at Florence, our own *Mars and Venus*, his profound and virile fresco of *S. Augustine*, in the Ognissanti, and those from the Villa Lemmi, now in the Louvre, his *Adoration of the Magi* in the Uffizi (which deeply impressed Leonardo), and some of his loveliest Madonnas, such as those of the Magnificat and of the Pomegranate in the Uffizi and the little picture in the Poldi-Pezzoli Collection at Milan, belong to this time. An invitation to Rome in 1481 produced the elaborate frescoes in the Sistine Chapel.

Gradually a change took place in Botticelli's outlook. His devout and melancholy temperament came under the influence of Savonarola, and the lively paganism which he had studied among the Humanists of the Medicean circle, and which had produced such masterpieces as the *Birth of Venus* and the allegory of *Spring*, became distasteful to him. The heavens in his *Coronation of the Virgin* at Florence are aflame with a spiritual fire and rapture not previously seen in his work; even the colour with its blaze of gold and azure and scarlet recalls the celestial splendours of the devout Fra Angelico.

In Botticelli's last years his hand loses a little of its former certainty, and the rhythm of his touch is replaced by rhythm of grouping. Of this the



Florence, Uffizi

Photograph : Anderson

BOTTICELLI  
THE THREE GRACES FROM "PRIMAVERA"



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*Nativity* (1534) in the National Gallery is an exquisite specimen. As in *The Coronation of the Virgin*, a circle of angelic dancers step daintily and joyfully through the air, but instead of the rather stodgy saints who occupy the lower part of the picture in Florence, we have a charming *Nativity* group, while on the other side of the river in the foreground, angels greet and embrace the mortals who, like Botticelli's friend Savonarola, have just passed over. In the flow and balance of its linear design, as in its colour, this is one of the happiest of Botticelli's later works. Even the famous allegory of *Calumny* in the Uffizi, where he succeeds in recapturing his early preciseness, has not so melodious a rhythm. Yet for any other man it would be a masterpiece. It is only by comparison with achievements like the group of the Three Graces in the *Primavera* or *The Birth of Venus*, that the *Calumny* appears to come short of perfection.

## CHAPTER VII

### *Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael*

THE marvellous mind of LEONARDO da Vinci was not fully revealed to his admiring contemporaries. They saw his amazing gifts as a draughtsman, his profound knowledge of anatomy and engineering, his untiring intellectual activities, not to mention a singular beauty of person, all frittered away on speculations which produced no tangible result, so that the artistic and other products of his life-long labours were not a tithe of what might have been expected. Modern researches among the manuscripts which Leonardo left behind him compel us to adopt a very different attitude.

The truth is that Leonardo, while inheriting a full measure of Florentine scientific curiosity, turned it to ends which none of his contemporaries understood. For them, the study of anatomy and geometry was inseparable from the studies of the Humanists in classical art and literature. For them, science could only bear fruit when allied to what was most noble in ancient tradition. From all this side of Renaissance activity Leonardo turned

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away to brood over the riddle of the earth, over the natural forces which formed it in the past, which govern it to-day, and which go to make up the life of man. Unlike the Humanists, he declined to accept the verdict of literature and tradition except when supported by practical experiment. Hence in his general method of research, as in physiology, in mechanics, in geology and other branches of knowledge he anticipated many modern ideas, and laid down the lines of future scientific progress. But his recognition of such facts as the immense antiquity of the earth ran counter to the current theology of the day. It was impossible to make such knowledge public without risking the charge of heresy, and its punishment. So Leonardo lived the life of a wandering recluse to prosecute his researches, and confided the results to manuscripts which can only be deciphered with difficulty and which were never set in order. His landscape backgrounds became, in like manner, the repository of his knowledge that long long ages of aqueous erosion had carved out the physical features of Italy. In these landscapes Leonardo carries us back to the remote epoch when the world was but half emerged from chaos, thereby suggesting irresistibly that idea of existence far beyond the confines of historical time of which so many are conscious when they see *La Gioconda*.

When we realize Leonardo's attitude to science

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we have the key to his art. His master Verrocchio had seemed to be a man of almost universal accomplishment, but the accomplishment came to him slowly as the reward of unceasing labour. This accomplishment Leonardo acquired almost at once, as the painting of the angel in Verrocchio's *Baptism* shows. His drawings possessed such fluent beauty and spirit, combined with knowledge, that they were recognized as the most perfect things of the kind which even the Florentine masters had produced. And then in his unfinished *Adoration of the Magi* in the Uffizi, he showed the way to new modes of work and thought. The outward aspects of the human form as a means of artistic expression had already been studied by the Pollaiuoli and others. Leonardo saw that the origin of movement is in the mind; the inward thought leads to the visible action; painting must be psychological. So in the *Adoration* we have no attempt at illustrating the Gospel incident. We have instead a psychological allegory; a study of the attitude of man—man credulous, man devout, man contemplative, man indifferent—towards revealed religion.

Again, may not painting show us things with the relief of sculpture? Must we be content with flat patterns? Shall we not need our whole palette, from pure white to deep black, if we are to get the force and projection of nature, and emphasize those niceties of gradation and those contrasts of light and



*Florence, Academy*

*Photograph . Anderson*

**LEONARDO AND VERROCCHIO**  
**TWO ANGELS FROM THE "BAPTISM"**



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shade which are needed to cover the whole range of man's facial emotions? The result in the case of the *Adoration* was that the picture speedily got so dark in tone that it was never finished. But the figures in it were so grandly designed that they exercised a potent influence even upon Michelangelo, and are the models for some of his noblest creations in the Sistine Chapel. The same darkness broods over our *Madonna of the Rocks* in the National Gallery, a product of Leonardo's residence in Milan. The greatest achievement of this time, however, is the fresco of *The Last Supper* in S. Maria delle Grazie. Owing to the painter's experimental methods it faded quickly, and later suffered both from re-painting and ill-treatment, but even in its present condition we see that it is the first work of the full Renaissance on a grand scale, the precursor of all that Michelangelo and Raphael were to do twenty or thirty years later. Its majestic design is vitalized by the keen insight into character which Leonardo developed from his psychological studies, and which has made this fresco count as the final presentation of the drama which it represents.

On his return to Florence, after the downfall of Ludovico Sforza his Milanese patron, Leonardo essayed another vast composition, the *Battle of Anghiari*. Here all was physical violence and fury, in strong contrast to the spiritual distress which dominates *The Last Supper*. Unfortunately both

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the cartoon and the unfinished painting of the *Battle of Anghiari* were destroyed, and we have to form our ideas of it from the drawings and engravings which have survived. It created a double sensation, because the young Michelangelo at the same time was producing his famous *Cartoon of Pisa*, and the rivalry between the old master and the young one attracted all artists in the Florentine circle, the boy Raphael among them. Before his work was finished Leonardo was summoned to Milan by its French conquerors, and thence he moved to Rome. But by this time he was growing old. His working days were almost over, and he finally travelled to France, at the invitation of Francis I, and died there in 1519.

What his natural genius was we can estimate from his cartoon of the *Madonna and St. Anne* at Burlington House. Not only can we see there his mastery of human beauty and the exquisite refinement of his modelling, but we can appreciate the intense vitality of his line; a line so firm, so grand, so delicate, and so instinct even now with his spirit that in every inch of it we seem to live with him in the very thrill of creation. Yet this power of making his art a living thing had results upon others which were not for their good. In their blind admiration his followers imagined that his secret lay in effects of projection and in dark shadows, so that the old idea of art as a superb wall-covering,



London, Royal Academy

Photograph : Mansell

LEONARDO DA VINCI  
MADONNA (DETAIL FROM CARTOON)



## *Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael*

a mosaic of delightfully shaped and spaced patches of colour, was soon swept away.

And his psychological subtlety was no less blindly imitated by men who could not understand it; hence the smile on the lips of such faces, as that of *La Gioconda* in the Louvre, come to be translated by his Milanese followers into a smirk or grimace. Luini and Solario, Boltraffio, Sodoma and Cesare da Sesto had talent, but it was quickly corrupted by Leonardo's overpowering example, while the lesser Milanese became mere imitative shadows, and very gloomy shadows, of the master whom they worshipped.<sup>1</sup>

MICHELANGELO, too, was a man of immense and varied gifts, but they were concentrated wholly upon his profession. In that profession sculpture took the first place. Painting he seems to have learned from some Ferrarese master, during a stay

<sup>1</sup> The history of Milanese painting before Leonardo's time really starts with Foppa, Butinone and Zenale, all trained under Paduan influences. Ambrogio Borgognone comes next, a real master in his narrow vein, with a singular eye for tone and colour. The stay of the great Bramante in Milan is marked by a few paintings in the heroic vein of Melozzo da Forli, and is reflected in the work of his interesting and fanciful follower Bramantino. Luini's early frescoes are charming. Solario, when training as a youth in Venice, almost rivals Bellini as a portrait painter. Sodoma has left frescoes in Siena and Rome which testify to great natural gifts frittered away in restless following of others. Gaudenzio Ferrari, much less talented, was far more independent, and even more unequal.

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at Bologna in 1494-5. Only three easel pictures by his hand are known, of which the National Gallery possesses two. The third is the circular *Holy Family* in the Uffizi at Florence. Our unfinished *Madonna with S. John and Angels* (809) is the earliest of the three, and the Uffizi *tondo* the latest. All have similar characteristics. They carry into painting something of the formal simplicity of design and the flat modelling of a bas-relief, though the latest of them, the Uffizi picture, shows a tendency towards full projection. With this simplicity of design and treatment goes a simplicity of colouring, which in our *Entombment* (790) produces a very powerful and lively result. Indeed this *Entombment* is in the direct descent from the fine tradition of Masaccio and Piero della Francesca, modified by a certain stiffness and quaintness due to Michelangelo's Ferrarese teaching: it might well have become the starting-point for a great new school of painting.

But in the increased projection of the Uffizi *tondo* we see a direct influence from the forcible modelling of Signorelli, who inspired the design. This tendency was soon afterwards accentuated by competition with Leonardo da Vinci. Leonardo's *Battle of Anghiari* called forth all its creator's mastery of passion, forcible relief and vigorous movement. Michelangelo in answer designed his *Cartoon of Pis 1* for the opposite wall, in which he

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displayed such mastery of the human body in vigorous action as to make his reputation assured. But Leonardo's example left its mark, and as time went on Michelangelo's thoughts became more and more concerned with effects of projection, and less with the ideal of large design in low relief.

Withdrawn by Pope Julius II from his various works in sculpture, in order to paint the vaulted ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican, Michelangelo was compelled to undertake the commission which resulted in the supreme achievement of his life as a painter. The general scheme is one of panels, supported by a painted architectural setting. It includes 343 figures, some of them twelve feet in height, and covering some 10,000 square feet of surface, a considerable proportion of which was painted by Michelangelo's own hand. This vast undertaking occupied him for more than four years. In general, Michelangelo adheres to the ideal of a modified bas-relief with which he had started his career as a painter, so that even in the figures presented as detached statues the relief and projection are not forced. In this presentation of the human form he evolves an ideal which has something of the bigness of Masaccio, whose frescoes he had studied, something of Leonardo's large manner, and much that he derived from his study of Donatello and classical art. The compound is deservedly regarded as the culmination of figure painting in Europe.

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And it is allied with a scheme of broad and simple colour in which the flesh tones are foiled with draperies of orange, bronze-green and lilac, and set against a background of ultramarine. The result is wonderfully fresh, vigorous, and harmonious; indeed the ceiling deserves to be studied for its colour almost as much as for its rendering of the human figure in its grandest and most heroic manifestation.

The effect of this gigantic achievement was immediate and profound. It was a revelation to all who saw it, and Raphael, among the rest, altered his style at once in response to the new ideals of form and design which faced him there. Nearly thirty years later, Michelangelo had to paint *The Last Judgment* on the great wall over the altar, but failed to recapture the breadth of style which the ceiling had shown. His figures are still colossal and solid, but the desire for greater projection makes them seem too bulky and inflated. They are big dark separate masses, no longer unified by one great decorative scheme. Yet their sheer force and weight and variety of violent movement impressed the men of the time even more than the comparatively restful treatment of the ceiling; and Michelangelo's example which, if judged by its earlier phase, might have redeemed painting, proved in the end an active element in its destruction.

Painting, however, with Michelangelo came as an

Photograph Anderson

MICHELANGELO

ADAM, FROM THE SISTINE CHAPEL CEILING

Rome, The Vatican





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occasional and undesired interruption to the main purpose of his life. He was by profession a sculptor, and though he did not complete more than a fraction of the works which he contemplated, what he has left behind is enough to justify his immense repute. In the well-known figures of *Slaves* in the Louvre, originally intended for the tomb of Pope Julius II., we have a sculptured analogy for the noble style of the Sistine Ceiling. In the Sacristy of San Lorenzo his speculations upon death and the grave give birth to a new and profoundly impressive symbolism. This, during his last years, develops with the growth of his own melancholy into something so direct in expression, and so remote from all memories of classical sculpture that, in the *Entombment* in the Duomo at Florence, and still more in the *Pietá* in the Rondanini Palace at Rome, Michelangelo anticipates the most original and daring work of modern times. It was, however, by his power and accomplishment that he chiefly impressed his contemporaries; his deeper thoughts and feelings were beyond their reach.

Michelangelo and Leonardo learned their art under the cultured and critical eyes of the Florentine craftsmen. From boyhood they were compelled to face such competition in drawing and design as existed nowhere else in Europe. RAPHAEL had

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none of this severe schooling. He had to teach himself by imitating and surpassing in turn the painters under whom he worked. He begins at Urbino as the pupil of Timoteo Viti, and surpasses him in our *Vision of a Knight* (213) in the National Gallery. Then from Timoteo he turns to Perugino, the most famous Umbrian painter of the day, and in the *Crucifixion* (3943) of the Mond Collection produces a work which might well pass for Perugino's own.

Coming to Florence in 1504, at the age of twenty-one, Raphael found a group of masters there whose products could not be so quickly rivalled. Not only had he such things as Masaccio's frescoes to study, but the mature genius of Leonardo, and the growing power of Michelangelo had to be reckoned with. There, too, was Fra Bartolommeo, with whom he soon became intimate: a master of pictur-esque pose, swelling draperies, and grandiose rhythm. Under these various influences Raphael built up the composite style in which many of his most popular and attractive Madonnas were painted. As a rule these are admirably drawn and coloured, and designed with singular feeling for space and balance of line. The gentle family affection which they depict was congenial to Raphael's own serene temper, so that altogether they fulfil their purpose perfectly. But that purpose is not the whole of art, nor even a large part of it. When Raphael

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came to attempt a far more elaborate subject, the *Entombment*, now in the Borghese Gallery, all his newly acquired knowledge could not save him from failure. The *Entombment* is no more than the academic thesis of a hard-working student, crammed with passages which display his knowledge and accomplishment; yet there is no spark of creative insight to vitalize this new rendering of the ancient theme, nor any sign that Raphael felt its profound significance. Had he died in 1507, when this picture was completed, we should have remembered him as a most capable designer and painter of simple subjects, and as a most delicate draughtsman, but otherwise as one not much greater than his contemporaries Andrea del Sarto and Fra Bartolommeo.

In 1508, however, Raphael was invited to Rome to paint in the Vatican for Pope Julius II. There all the half-digested learning which he had acquired in Florence was absorbed, and replaced by a new influence. Rome was the great storehouse of the relics of classical art which every year were unearthed as the result of building operations. In these relics Raphael discovered an inspiration wholly congenial to his temper. His first great painting in the Vatican, the *Dispute of the Sacrament*, though full of Umbrian and Florentine memories, shows how vastly his mental horizon was enlarged. In the second fresco, the *Parnassus*,

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the blithe spirit of the classical world is caught to perfection, and is recorded again in the *Galatea* of the Farnesina. In the *School of Athens* we see its graver side, accompanied with a massiveness of form which reflects the profound impression made upon Raphael by the unveiling of a part of the Sistine Ceiling in 1509. Raphael, however, by this time had an assured strength of his own which, though attracted by Michelangelo's noble vehemence, was not carried away by it as were weaker men. He had, for example, an extraordinary gift for portraiture, which he used with effect both in his great frescoes and in panel paintings. Of these portraits the *Baldassare Castiglione* in the Louvre is the most accessible, the *Cardinal* at Madrid the most searching and superb. On a grand scale this faculty was triumphantly employed in his fresco of *The Mass of Bolsena*. Among Raphael's friends in Rome was Sebastian "del Piombo," who had left Venice after the death of his master Giorgione. From him Raphael derived an idea of the Venetian scheme of colouring, and in *The Mass of Bolsena* he blends this new perception with all his other powers, and so nobly that had the picture been painted by Titian (and he could not have done such a thing till at least thirty years later) it would have been rightly considered his masterpiece.

The immense fame which Raphael acquired was to prove his undoing. Princes and prelates pressed



Rome, Farnesina

Photograph · Anderson

RAPHAEL.  
GALATEA



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him for work; he became surveyor of Roman antiquities, and architect of S. Peter's. Even with a whole train of assistants he was unable to cope with the multiplicity of his tasks and his duties. He could no longer work with his own hand upon most of the paintings and designs which were produced under his name. He could merely give sketches and drawings to be enlarged and developed by his pupils, whose finished product he might or might not have time to re-touch.<sup>1</sup> The wonder is not that so many of the products which bear his name are disappointing, but that some of them should still be so fine. What could be more grand and spacious and fresh than the cartoon of the *Miraculous Draught of Fishes* at South Kensington; what more solemn and yet more gracious than the *Sibyls* over the arch of S. Maria della Pace in Rome? When Raphael is tired, and he died from over-work, he reverts to conventional postures and second-hand graces which irritate the spectator. He rarely exhibits the intense vitality of line which thrills us in the handling of Botticelli or Leonardo or Michelangelo. As a colourist he is experimental, and not infrequently disagreeable. But the immense activity of his Roman years resulted in a certain number of works which, in their different

<sup>1</sup> Giulio Romano and Francesco Penni were the chief assistants; but many others, including the Sienese Baldassare Peruzzi, were directly influenced or employed by Raphael.

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ways, are masterpieces that have never been excelled, and on them, rather than on the charming group of Madonna-pieces with which popular taste associates him, his fame will rest secure.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *The Rise of the Venetian School*

AIDED by her natural interest in scientific and literary studies, Florence during the fifteenth century had made a steady and remarkable advance in mastering the fine arts. The north-eastern side of the Apennines, during the same period, shows no such ordered progress. Venice, the great centre of wealth and commercial activity, delighted in all that contributed to the pleasures of the eye:—in splendid pageants, in superb architecture, in patterned stuffs and ceramics imported from the East, and in the crafts of glass-working and mosaic which had become part of her civic tradition. But in all these activities the painter at first played a very humble part. The first signs of a new life appeared about 1410, when two artists, Gentile da FABRIANO from Umbria, and Antonio Pisano, commonly known as PISANELLO from Verona, came to work on the decoration of the Ducal Palace.

Gentile da Fabriano was not a great artist, but he inherited much of the Sienese feeling for beauty

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of person, of colour and line, added to a lively fancy which filled his compositions with flowers and jewels, rich brocades, and gentle smiling faces. This splendour suited the Venetian temper, and left its mark upon two other men of greater power than his. The first of these was Pisanello, the greatest of Italian and indeed of all other medalists, and the painter of a few charming portraits and pictures, of which our *Vision of St. Eustace* (1436) is a familiar specimen. Pisanello, when painting, displays a childlike delight in the minute presentation of natural objects. It is to his medals we turn to find the consummate master of design; as alert now in suppressing irrelevant details, as in his painting he was eager to introduce them.

Gentile's other pupil, JACOPO BELLINI, though he had not Pisanello's personal genius, was destined to have a far wider influence upon the growth of art. To many of us he will remain only a name. The decorative paintings, by which in his own time he made his repute, have all perished. Only by two volumes of sketches, one in the Louvre, the other in the British Museum, can we estimate his quality. Except in his knowledge of perspective, Jacopo shows little of that scientific interest in form and line and proportion which his Florentine contemporaries display. So soon as his figures look passably like real human beings Jacopo is usually content; he does not stop to trouble about anatomi-

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cal trifles. His mind is too busy with setting the religious themes which he was called upon to illustrate in a world peopled with the men of his time, where the tilled fields of North Italy spread away towards a background of rocky hills, and the buildings are fanciful erections in which, with much display of perspective, memories of classical sculpture alternate or blend with the current architecture of the day. Such lively inventions were not in themselves substantial enough to be an actual foundation for a new school of painting. Yet they did indicate to the next two generations a direction in which the stiff glittering decorative tradition, which had survived in Venice from Byzantine times, might be profitably and almost infinitely enlarged.

It fell to Jacopo's two sons, Gentile and Giovanni Bellini, and to his son-in-law Andrea MANTEGNA, to reap the first-fruits of this new vision. As the Humanists at the court of the Medici in Florence were providing an intellectual background for the craftsmen of Tuscany and Umbria, so the famous University of Padua, and the cultured court of the Este family at Ferrara, were now making a like contribution to art in Venice and North Italy. Padua, it must be remembered, in addition to its university, contained a famous series of works by Giotto and by Donatello, so that the artists there had opportunities of learning the Florentine tradi-

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tion from models unequalled except actually in Florence itself.<sup>1</sup>

Upon Mantegna however the glamour of ancient Rome was still more potent. His passionate antiquarianism discovered in Roman statues and reliefs an ideal which, when translated into paint, could be applied to any subject to which the artist might wish to set his hand. So all his painting, with the exception of a few noble portraits, is a kind of coloured sculpture in the flat, becoming indeed in his later years a true fictive relief in grey stone upon a marbled background. Our *Triumph of Scipio* (902) and *Samson and Delilah* (1145), in the National Gallery, are typical examples. It is an austere formula, but when used by a master like Mantegna its beauty and expressive power are extraordinary. Even the solemn raptures of the mystic are not beyond its range; indeed the grave and abstract simplicity of the process actually contributes to the impression of things unearthly and supernatural. The *Madonna* in the Bergamo Gallery is an exquisite example; a similar feeling of

<sup>1</sup> The centre of art training in Padua was the School of Squarcione, not himself a painter of importance, but one who through Mantegna and his other pupils exerted an immense influence in North Italy extending from Venice right across to Bologna and Milan. Among the minor men who reflect this influence, Bernardo da Parenzo, the assistant of Mantegna; Gregorio Schiavone, a Dalmatian; Bono da Ferrara; and the Bolognese Marco Zoppo may be mentioned.

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awe dominates the *Imperator Mundi* of the Mond Collection, and the *Presentation* at Berlin.

What command of colour Mantegna suppressed in pursuit of this ideal we can judge from our *Agony in the Garden* (1417), a youthful work, strongly reminiscent of Jacopo Bellini, and from many another delightful panel, such as the *Madonna with Angels* at Milan, in which he forgets for the moment to play the enthusiastic professor of Roman history, and consents to be merely a great and gifted artist. His most notable works on a large scale are the frescoes in the Eremitani at Padua and the Castello at Mantua, with the much damaged but still gorgeous cartoons at Hampton Court representing *The Triumph of Cæsar*.

Mantegna's authority was naturally great, and spread far beyond his immediate circle. Two of his most direct followers came from Ferrara. The elder, Cosimo TURA, had some strong rustic strain in him: the curiosity, too, of one who collects odd shells, and is interested by gnarled roots, or queer fishes with grotesque spines and goggle eyes. His colours, apple-greens and milky blues, suggest the country, so do the sunburnt faces of his angels. But for the rest he takes up Mantegna's sculpturesque ideal, and carries it so far that his figures often look as if they were cut out of metal, or hewed with grim determination from some hard tough stone. In his fellow-citizen, Francesco COSSA,

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this sculptural canon is less uncompromising, and is allied with a less austere taste in colour, a more courtly eye for human beauty, and a grander sense of design. Frescoes in the Schifanoia Palace at Ferrara, and the large altarpiece in the Academy at Bologna, illustrate Cossa's power and variety. Tura's personality can be estimated from his works at Trafalgar Square.<sup>1</sup> Ercole ROBERTI, a younger Ferrarese of the same group, was more fluent and less consistent, but sometimes an admirable painter, as our *Israelites gathering Manna* (1217) will show. The treatment of the background here is far nearer to the spirit of Jacopo Bellini than most of the pictures which are now baptized with Jacopo's name.

The Bellini group in Venice had artistic rivals in the Vivarini group at Murano. The Vivarini were impressed by the sculptural ideas of the Paduans, and under them was trained Carlo CRIVELLI, that delightful artist, of whose work the National Gallery possesses an unrivalled collection. To his Muranese training, and to the ancient Byzantine tradition, we may ascribe the material splendours

<sup>1</sup> The other Ferrarese, with the exception of Dosso and L'Ortolano, had less character. Lorenzo Costa became the partner and tame follower of Francia; Garofalo, later, succumbs to Raphael. A minor centre of interest is Cremona, where Girolamo da Cremona, F. Bianchi-Ferrari (cf. No. 2 at Hertford House), Altobello Melone, Boccaccio Boccacino, and Giulio Campi flourished. In the Romagna, the fickle Marco Palmezzano, and the Zaganelli brothers were the chief figures after Crivelli.



Paris, Louvre

Photograph : A'mtri

ANTONELLO  
“THE CONDOTTIERE”



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of our vast “Demidoff” altarpiece (788) with its bosses of gilding and profuse jewellery. Crivelli never forgot these early impressions, and remained through life a belated primitive while the artistic world all about him was changing fast. Yet he brought to his work such powers of sculptural modelling, such a command of firm sinuous line, such superb colour, such keen and witty observation and such scrupulous craftsmanship, that we can turn, to him again and again without being satiated. His feeling for spacing was not strong. His designs are apt to be confused and over-crowded; his line is that of the goldsmith rather than of the draughtsman. But his work has true vitality, and so retains a perennial attraction, when much that is far larger in style and far more fluent in execution is found after all to be rather empty stuff.

The lines on which Venetian painting afterwards developed were affected, if not determined, by a meeting which took place in 1456, when Crivelli was barely of age. At the court of Milan one “Piero di Burges,” a northern artist, whom some identify with Petrus Christus the pupil of Hubert van Eyck, happened to be working side by side with a young Sicilian painter, ANTONELLO da Messina. From this Piero it is supposed that Antonello learned the Flemish method of painting in oil which, by common tradition, he took with

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him afterwards to Venice. The "method," no doubt, was a series of workshop recipes for the perfect clarification of oils and varnishes, and not any secret process of manipulation. To a man of Antonello's genius manipulation came easily. In sureness of hand and accuracy of eye he was at least the equal of his Flemish acquaintance: in his sense of design he far surpassed him. Recognizing in Giovanni Bellini an artist of finer gifts than any he had previously studied, Antonello worked his way from the minute Flemish style which we see in our *S. Jerome in his Study* (1418), to the breadth and power of our *Self Portrait* (1441), or the equally famous *Condottiere* in the Louvre. And for space and tenderness not even Bellini has excelled Antonello's *Crucifixion* (1466). It is one of the painter's last works. Antonello died at a comparatively early age, but his influence lived on in Giovanni Bellini, who survived Antonello for thirty years, and forms the connecting link between Mantegna and Titian.

For GIOVANNI BELLINI, when we first become acquainted with him, is a disciple not of his father but of the Paduans. We have in the National Gallery two striking examples of this early Paduan style. One is *The Blood of the Redeemer* (1433); the other, *The Agony in the Garden* (1472), was painted no doubt at about the same time as the similar work (1417) by his brother-in-law Mantegna.



Venice, S. Giovanni Crisostomo

Photograph : Anderson

**GIOVANNI BELLINI**  
SS. JEROME CHRISTOPHER & AUGUSTINE



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But the difference between the temper of the two young men is already clear. Mantegna's picture is all rigid and sculptural. In Bellini the sculptural element is practically confined to the figures. The landscape is pure Nature, an effect of blood-red twilight over distant hills which makes the picture doubly impressive. This sympathy between man and Nature, expanding into a tenderness and humanity which sweetens all that he touches, is the keynote of Bellini's genius. But he would not be the great figure that he is, had this temper not been allied to quite exceptional artistic powers. Inside the comparatively narrow range of devotional pictures to which, for the most part, he was limited, Bellini displays such a variety of design, such a sense of form and, above all, such gifts as a colourist, that his example dominated Venice for a quarter of a century. The term "School of Bellini" might well be used of countless painters who never set foot in his studio, yet derived from its products the whole of their inspiration.

Bellini's colour, in particular, became the model for almost all the Venetians of his time. Later, as "The Venetian Secret," it developed into a sort of mystery for ages which could not reproduce its rare quality. This quality, it would seem, was due in part to the fact that Bellini was trained as a tempera painter, and to the end of his life used tempera as a foundation for paintings in oil. The

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use of oil paint he learned from the example of Antonello, and by spreading oil paint in delicate films over his pale luminous beginnings in tempera, Bellini invested his colours with unequalled translucency and splendour. Much of this splendour was a communicable quality, for all his followers acquired some portion of it. But the use to which Bellini put it was incommunicable. He was the inventor of those contrasts and harmonies of azure and scarlet, of pale silver blue and rosy red and golden brown, foiled with white and deep green, which are the glory of the Venetian School. Those who followed him were but apt pupils or sedulous apes.

Educated, as we have seen, in the Paduan School of hard sculptural form, Bellini's natural tenderness of vision speedily began to invest these forms with atmosphere, smoothing out their knots and wrinkles and angles, until at last his designs are composed of broad flat planes, exquisitely gradated, fused with the softness which the use of oil paint now rendered possible, and enveloped in luminous air. The wonderful *Transfiguration* at Naples shows us how the change began. Our *Madonna of the Meadow* (599) in the National Gallery, even though it may not be by Bellini's own hand, will give some idea of the artistic results which were finally obtained. The well-known *Doge Loredano* (189) testifies to his skill in portraiture. But his full power, his



Venice, Academy

Photograph : Anderson

BASAITI  
CHRIST ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES



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variety and the fine judgment which controls even his most poignant expressions of feeling, can only be judged in Italy, and at Venice in particular. Bellini lived to a great age, and his altarpiece in S. Giovanni Crisostomo at Venice, the last of his long series of devotional paintings, is the most impressive and surprising of them all. We look through an archway at the aged S. Jerome, set high aloft against a glowing evening sky and a range of mountain peaks over which a filmy wreath of cloud is drifting. For its serene perfection the picture merits a signature like that on another important, but very different, work of the painter's extreme old age, the *Bacchanal*, in the Widener Collection at Philadelphia—"Joannes Bellinus invictus fecit."

Some words must be devoted to one or two notable pictures and painters under Bellini's influence. No visitor to the Venice Academy is likely to overlook or to forget the two noble works of Marco BASAITI, *The Calling of the Sons of Zebedee*, and *Christ on the Mount of Olives*. The grim power of the Vicentine Bartolommeo MONTAGNA becomes at times quite gentle and gracious under the same spell. His pupil Giovanni BUONCONSIGLIO in his *Pietá* at Vicenza, an early work which he never afterwards equalled, displays an intensity of feeling worthy of Bellini himself, with a grandeur of design, a sense of vast space, and an austere colour which recall Piero della Francesca. Compared with such

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power as this, all the skilful pictures turned out by CIMA and others who worked under Bellini's eye, seem so many charming trifles.<sup>1</sup> Our *Circumcision* (803) by Marco MARZIALE, is one of the exceptions, yet the strength of it is not derived from Marziale's teacher Bellini, but from Lombardy.

There is also a group of small Venetian portraits of exceptional beauty, such as our *Portrait of a Youth* (2509) in the National Gallery, which criticism is now tending to associate with Bellini himself. In the past many of these were ascribed to Alvise VIVARINI, a younger member of the Muranese painter-family of that name, who was strongly influenced by Antonello da Messina. But Vivarini's signed works do not show the supreme accomplishment of these anonymous portraits, so that his place in the roll of great Venetians is not quite secure.<sup>2</sup>

Giovanni's brother GENTILE BELLINI was held to be the best portrait-painter in the Venice of his day, and as such was sent to Constantinople in 1479 to the court of the Sultan Mohammed II. The badly damaged portrait of the Sultan (3099)

<sup>1</sup> The most familiar names among the secondary followers of Bellini are Rocco Marconi, Catena, Previtali, Bissolo, Rondinelli and Benedetto Diana.

<sup>2</sup> Bartolommeo Veneto merits special notice among the secondary portrait painters of the time; his work being a singular blend of Venetian and Milanese influences with a wiry precision recalling the style of Dürer or Cranach.



Vicenza, Gallery

BUONCONSIGLIO  
PIETÀ

*Photograph : Alinari*



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in the National Gallery is one of the few relics of that visit, but in quality it is now much inferior to our *Mathematician* (1213) and *Fra Teodoro da Urbino as S. Dominic* (1440). Our much darkened *Adoration of the Magi* (3098) will give some idea of the other side of Gentile's activities, the painting of ceremonies and pageants, including a large number of contemporary portraits. Examples of these great groups survive at Venice and Milan. Artistically they are less perfect than Gentile's single portraits, in which by a simple and delicate method of working, he attains a singular blending of substance with refined characterization.

It was, however, in Vittore CARPACCIO that the Venetian delight in pageantry found its most complete expression. Gentile's attitude towards such things was grave and serious. Carpaccio had much of Jacopo Bellini's light-hearted fancy. No one knew better how to tell a story on a large scale, embellished with countless figures, handsome dresses and rich colour; and yet to put the whole thing together so well that, with all its varied diversions and incidents, it does not look confused or over-crowded. Our little picture of *S. Ursula leaving her Father* (3085), in the National Gallery, will give a general idea of Carpaccio's quality and style; but he can only be seen at his full strength in Venice. There his pictures in the Academy illustrating the legend of S. Ursula, and the smaller series in

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S. Giorgio degli Schiavoni, illustrating the legend of S. George, are among the most popular as they are the most entertaining attractions of the city. In them the mediæval taste for story-telling and the Venetian love for pageantry are most pleasantly combined with an observation of ordinary daylight, which renders Carpaccio in certain phases, as when he paints the bedroom of S. Ursula or the Study of S. Jerome, the forerunner of De Hooch and Vermeer of Delft.

But it was not on these lines that Venetian painting developed during the next century. Although the Venetian State and the religious confraternities continued to employ artists to record their power and glory, the private citizen had now acquired the habit of having pictures painted for his own home. As in other cities and countries, these private commissions began with portraits and devotional pieces. In Venice the study of classical literature had not been so keen as in Florence, so that subjects taken from pagan mythology are rather rare at first. The well-known "Allegories" of Giovanni Bellini, in the Uffizi and the Venice Academy, are early examples of the way in which Venice approached such themes; the mystical element seen in the Uffizi picture, being developed a little later by GIORGIONE into a dreamy romanticism, which for awhile dominated all the rising generation.



Venice, Academy

Photograph : Anderson

CARPACCIO  
ST. URSULA IN HER BEDROOM



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With this new romanticism went a pleasant idealization of contemporary life in country houses, inland, under the hills, with their summits rising behind and a wide expanse of sea or open plain below; a place where there are fair ladies and ever-present music. Nowhere except in the Venetian School could such dreams have then been rendered in paint; no one but Bellini had mastered the intimate communion between man and Nature, the true secret of landscape, on which those dreams were founded. Giorgione's experimental temper had little of the Florentine scientific spirit in it. He was one who strayed boldly in this direction or that, as his fancy dictated, seeking new worlds to conquer. At one moment, as in the famous Castelfranco *Madonna*, he rivals Bellini in dignity and serenity, introducing to Venice the idea of a larger and more geometrical style of design. At another, as in the *Tempest* of the Giovanelli Palace, he stimulates by a seeming disorder of thought and composition. Finally, in frescoes that have faded from the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, he seems to have attacked the problem of the nude figure with a novel and majestic realism.

Such achievements stirred the hitherto placid pool of Venetian painting as it had never been stirred before. The decade between 1500 and 1510 became an artistic battlefield on which the older school, headed by the great figure of Giovanni

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Bellini, was faced, and finally overwhelmed, by the younger generation. Giorgione's early death removed the leader of the new movement, and perhaps enhanced his fame with posterity; but the movement went on, and under Titian acquired a fresh impetus which soon became irresistible.



Venice, Giardini Palace

Photograph Anderson

GIORGIONE  
THE TEMPEST



## CHAPTER IX

### *Correggio and Titian*

WE have now followed the two main currents of Italian painting from their respective sources to the opening years of the sixteenth century. In the case of Florence the stream had spent its force. In one or two portraits by PONTORMO, and notably in his fresco decoration in the Villa at Poggio a Caiano near Florence, which is quite the most fresh and light-hearted product of the time, we recognize a genuine talent. Had the painter developed the vein of fanciful naturalism which this lunette displays, he would have become one of the world's great decorative artists. But the spirit of his age was too strong for him, and Pontormo, like so many other Florentines of his time, spent all his force in attempting to improve upon the heroic nudes of Michelangelo. His pupil BRONZINO devoted himself chiefly to painting the portraits of the reigning Medicean House, setting a fashion in stately if rather stiff presentation which lasted till the days of Van Dyck.<sup>1</sup> Of Bronzino's essays in

<sup>1</sup> One of the most interesting links with Van Dyck is Sofonisba Anguisciola, the first woman painter to rise to fame. A Cremonese

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allegorical composition the *Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time* (651) in the National Gallery is the most successful. It is an ingenious and brilliant compound of the elements which had contributed to the success of the Florentine School—its scientific study of form and movement, its connexion with sculpture, here almost unduly stressed, and its fine use of colour as a decorative addition to what had been conceived as monochrome. It is, in fact, a final product of the Florentine tradition.

All Italy, except the Venetian territory, was feeling the effect of wars and invasions and foreign dominance. Rome itself was sacked by the Imperialist soldiers in 1527, and only those artists who were courtiers, like Bronzino, or were great enough to live in melancholy isolation, like Michelangelo, could work undisturbed.

Venice, sheltered by the lagoons, escaped the troubles which overwhelmed the rest of Italy. Though she lost some of her Eastern trade in the course of the contest against the growing power of

by birth, she painted portraits for the Court of Philip II at Madrid, retiring later to Genoa, where in extreme old age she entertained and impressed Van Dyck. Rather later, Artemisia Gentileschi, visiting the Court of Charles I with her father Orazio, also achieved success in portraiture. Of the short-lived Elisabetta Sirani of Bologna we know a little; of Titian's girl-pupil, Irene da Spilimbergo, almost nothing. But the roll of Italian women painters ends, not ingloriously, in the eighteenth century with the Venetian pastellist Rosalba Carriera, whose fame spread all over Europe.

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the Turks, she was still strong enough and rich enough to extend a protecting arm over the states and cities in her neighbourhood, so that art in the Venetian territories continued to flourish all through the sixteenth century. The path, as we have seen, had been prepared by Giovanni Bellini. In his youth he had acquired firmness and solidity from the example of his brother-in-law Mantegna. But he was not content to remain under the spell of that master's rigid antiquarianism. His native tenderness and humanity could not be tied down to the limitations which Roman bas-reliefs imposed. He saw man in his relation to Nature, a being substantial and capable alike of significant movement and profound feeling, but set about always with space and light and colour. And this environment, when charged with the hues of dawn or evening, might be an echo and a potent echo of man's spiritual condition, so that landscape became for Bellini no mere staining or variegation of a background to painted figures, no mere exercise in linear and atmospheric perspective, but a necessary part of the figure scheme, the chalice within which the precious wine of his invention was contained, as necessary to the worshipper as the wine itself. It is a mistake to think of Bellini and the Venetians who came after him merely as fine colourists. Great colourists they frequently were, but the essence of their contribution to the arts is the fusion which

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they effected by means of colour between man and his environment. Florentine design was made up of lines and masses enriched by colour; it is in essence a noble kind of coloured drawing. Bellini was the first to build up a picture with subtly fused and luminous *tones*, the first true painter.

In North Italy there was a much younger man who was even more instinctively a true painter, and whose personal temper, though utterly different from Bellini's, was to exercise an influence no less widespread. The ancient city of Parma had shown no particular interest or accomplishment in the arts, so that when in 1494 she gave birth to CORREGGIO, his appearance is a phenomenon as isolated as his peculiar genius. Judging from the extant early specimens of his work, Correggio had no regular and definite apprenticeship, but picked up hints from various sources, chiefly from the Ferrarese and from Mantegna. Then he must have come into touch with one of the Venetians, possibly Lorenzo Lotto. So inspired, he painted the *Christ taking Leave of His Mother*, which was presented to the National Gallery in 1928. Here a new life is given to the Bellinesque tradition of the sympathy of nature with human sorrow. Even by Bellini himself the suppressed agony of that parting could not have been harmonized more appropriately with the sombre light of a dying day.

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But this approach to Bellini was only momentary. In his decorations to the Camera of S. Paolo at Parma, Correggio reveals his real self, a light-hearted pagan, playing with his *amorini* and his goddesses as freely as a fresco painter in Pompeii might have done fifteen hundred years earlier. Then follows the series of paintings in the dome of S. Giovanni Evangelista, where saints and apostles ride aloft upon the clouds like dark Titans on some mountain ridge. It is almost incredible that the painter should not have visited Rome, and drawn his general inspiration from Michelangelo's figures on the Sistine Ceiling, though the paganism of the conception is Correggio's and Correggio's only.

His temper, however, is most fully shown in the painted dome of the Cathedral. The fresco is so darkened and discoloured that the first impression is disconcerting. What meets the eye is a circle of blotchy clouds, among which dim figures are wriggling and bare legs are kicking. Gradually the meaning emerges. It is a daring attempt to present an effect of recession into the very vault of heaven—a recession involving an almost inconceivable mastery of perspective and of the human figure. But we are not concerned so much with the technical difficulties which Correggio faced and overcame, as with the spirit of the painting. Hitherto these devotional subjects had been treated with an atmosphere of sober reverence, or of religious

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rapture. Correggio transports the Assumption of the Virgin into the atmosphere of light opera, where draperies billow and flutter, and pretty creatures reveal their attractions, smiling down upon the audience with the certainty of winning admiration and applause.

In Correggio we find then a sudden appreciation of feminine charm, which the leaders of the Catholic Revival were quick to exploit. Paintings in churches had originally been designed to promote feelings of awe and majesty, or to convey instruction. All through the fifteenth century something of those primitive intentions had survived. Now it was realized that the appeal of painting might be extended; that it might present religion and the future life as something human, pleasant, playful, alluring. So Correggio's frank sensuous delight in beauty was taken up by others, and turned into over-sweetness or thinly veiled sensuality; while the rhythm of his figures and draperies, already rather too fluent and facile, was turned to rhetorical flourish.

Yet this happy pagan was a great painter, the first perhaps to realize that oil paint could be a very pleasant substance if it were used with far more "body" than the general practice of the time admitted. Our *Madonna of the Basket* (23) in the National Gallery is an easily accessible proof. In substance and handling it might be the work of



Parma, Gallery

Photograph : Anderson

**CORREGGIO**  
MADONNA WITH ST. JEROME (DETAIL)



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some master of the eighteenth or nineteenth century, instead of being painted before the year 1525. In this matter of the direct handling of oil paint Correggio is in advance even of Titian, who for a long time retained the Bellinesque tempera foundation. Nor could Titian, master though he was, paint human flesh with such a feeling for its softness and texture. The arm of S. Catherine in Correggio's famous picture of the *Madonna with S. Jerome* in the Gallery at Parma has the quality of life itself. His other great gift is that of colour. Within a somewhat narrow range Correggio is an unequalled master of silvery and luminous colour, a faculty which developed side by side with his paganism. It is thus in our *Mercury instructing Cupid* (10) at Trafalgar Square, in the *Antiope* of the Louvre, in the *Io* and the *Ganymede* at Vienna, that Correggio's genius finds the most complete expression.

Correggio working in provincial solitude broke with the past almost unconsciously. In Venice an older man, who outlived Correggio by many years, made the breach definite and final. TITIAN had the advantage of being from boyhood in touch with great masters and a great movement. His native genius was encouraged by contact with the most formidable potentates and the wittiest man of letters of the age. He was able to pursue his art in peace

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and honour at Venice, while Florence and Rome went in peril. So in the course of an active life prolonged far beyond the normal span, he could go forward from one phase of painting to another; beginning as a pupil of Bellini and ending as a precursor of Rembrandt.

Titian first comes into notice as a pupil of Giorgione, and one who followed his master's work so closely that, even in his own time, their products could scarcely be distinguished. Our National Gallery portrait called *Ariosto* (1944) illustrates this phase in Titian's career; the most notable part of it being the puffed grey satin sleeve, which has the very substance of the thing itself. This substantiality is typical of Titian all through his life. It is one of the chief sources of his power, and carries with it only one disadvantage, namely that on the relatively few occasions when he paints celestial figures among the clouds, the figures look too solid for their supports.

Still under Giorgione's influence, Titian embarks upon a series of romantic idylls, in which the human figure is most happily blended with elaborate landscape. *The Three Ages of Man* in the Bridgewater Gallery, the so-called *Sacred and Profane Love* in the Borghese Gallery at Rome, and our *Noli Me Tangere* (270) in the National Gallery, are famous examples. It is interesting to remember that the *Noli Me Tangere* is exactly contemporary with

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Correggio's *Christ taking Leave of His Mother*, where a parallel strain of devotional feeling is treated on similar lines. In its tender sincerity the *Noli Me Tangere* is unequalled among Titian's early works. The *Sacred and Profane Love* is no less supreme in its glowing and noble paganism, its delight in sheer beauty, tinged in true Giorgionesque fashion with an element of mystery. Technically it is still Bellinesque, a mosaic of glowing tones skilfully disposed and fused, but handled with a breadth of mass and force of contrast which Bellini never attained. A little later, when Titian painted three "Bacchanals" for a chamber in the Palace at Mantua, to match the one previously executed by the aged Bellini, he had to repaint a large part of the background of the older master's work, to bring it into harmony with his own more sumptuous tonality.

Of Titian's three paintings two are in Madrid, the third is our *Bacchus and Ariadne* (35). Ever since this picture was acquired for the National Gallery, it has been recognized as one of the supreme masterpieces of all time. Not only is it inspired with the very spirit of paganism. Not only do the figures move and riot with a life that is more than human. Not only does it combine the utmost breadth and splendour of colour with the most precise expression of detail, but as sheer painting it blends as no other work in the world has blended

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every device that knowledge and power can apply to the Bellinesque method. And by a merciful Providence it has escaped the evils which attend pictures that have been too well beloved, and end by destroying them. It is not repainted, it is not disfigured by cracking, it is not patched or blistered, it has not been over-cleaned. On the contrary; its original tone has now become a trifle too mellow owing to the thick varnish; but the deep golden glow that results is by no means out of keeping with the fervent spirit of the painting, and to many will seem to be an added attraction.

Meanwhile Titian was developing the craft of portrait painting from the Giorgionesque phase of the *Ariosto*, attaining in time to a grandeur of style, a solidity of presentation, a searching insight into human character, and a power tempered with extraordinary refinement, which anticipate and educate Velazquez. The famous *Homme au Gant* of the Louvre, the *Young Englishman* and the *Aretino* in the Pitti Palace at Florence, *Pope Paul III* at Naples, with the equestrian portrait of *Charles V at the Battle of Mühlberg* in Madrid, will illustrate successive stages of this advance. In our impressive group of *The Cornaro Family*, the greatest of all recent additions to the National Gallery, we see the final result. Here the old Venetian love of pageant and ceremonial reappears, embodied for once in a truly monumental design, unified by the sentiment



Paris, Louvre

Photograph : Mansell

TITIAN  
L'HOMME AU GANT



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of thanksgiving for high fortune, enriched with superb colour, and interpreted with such vigour of brushwork that at one time the picture was mistaken for a masterpiece by Tintoretto.

Titian's progress with religious and mythological painting was less consistent. Now and then he produced a masterpiece. Often his feeling for the substantial led to coarseness and materialism. Sometimes he is actually dull. The painter will seldom fail to find beauties of colour and handling even in conceptions which otherwise are perfunctory, infelicitous, or repellent; but it is not until the last years of his life that Titian seems to rediscover the fervour and unifying power which inspired the *Bacchanals*, and the *Noli Me Tangere*. He had long before dispensed with the fluid tenderness of the Bellinesque and Giorgionesque methods. Now he works with broken touches, often with hues that are no more than silvery browns and greys, to which some strong note of positive colour, like the intense blue in *The Entombment* at Madrid, may give a sudden contrasting splendour. The *Education of Cupid*, in the Borghese Gallery at Rome, with its fiery red, and superb use of pale yellow and blue, is a more vivid masterpiece of the same period; while in our charming *Mother and Child* (3948) in the Mond Collection, the aged Titian seems to join hands with Rembrandt. The culmination is reached in the great grey *Pietá* in the Venice Academy,

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designed by the painter for his own tomb, and left unfinished when he was carried off by the plague. Even Michelangelo, brooding perpetually over the secrets of the grave, has left us nothing more startling, more awe-inspiring, more ominous, than this vision of sudden death with which Titian's vast achievement closes.

It is necessary to isolate Titian and Correggio, if we are to understand the course which painting in Europe was afterwards to take. On the one hand we have the complete mastery of the human form in action embodied in the work of Michelangelo: with this we may group the complete mastery of its illustrative possibilities which we see in the work of Raphael. But the supreme examples of Michelangelo and Raphael are done in fresco. Neither of them explored the full possibilities of painting in oil. Yet that process, from its applicability to domestic needs, was soon to become the method in which almost all important painting was carried out.

But while Florence and Rome were thus still haunted by the idea that painting was a form of drawing enriched with colour, Titian and Correggio realized the value of oil paint as a thing which might be delightful in itself, and how, by the variety of its thickness and manipulation, it could invest natural effects with a new emphasis and significance. Not

Photograph : Anderson

TITIAN  
PIETÀ

State Ac. Mus.





## *Correggio and Titian*

only could pictorial effect be produced by broad masses of suitably coloured pigment, without the rigidity involved by a too strict linear or sculptural foundation; but by breaking and fusing the tones with each other, a suggestion of atmosphere and mystery could be attained which was essential to the growth of landscape, and invaluable for the expression of profound feeling, as Titian's later paintings prove.

With this extension of the possibilities of paint, there naturally went a corresponding extension of the painter's range of vision. The feminine grace of Correggio not only served as an inspiration to Baroccio and the painters of the Catholic Revival, and to the Mannerists under Parmigiano. Passing to France, it proved so sympathetic to the French temper that it remained there a live and potent force right up to the last decades of the nineteenth century. Titian's influence was wider still. Through his connexion with Charles V, some of his best work found a home in Spain, where it taught Velazquez much that he could have learned nowhere else. Through visitors and residents in Italy, like Van Dyck who once owned our *Cornaro Family*, and Poussin who copied the *Bacchanals*, it was carried to the Netherlands, to England, and to France. Francis I of France had been one of Titian's patrons: our Charles I was an enthusiastic collector of his work. Upon the Italy of his day the im-

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pression was no less profound. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the whole practice of the Venetian School of the sixteenth century is founded upon Titian's example. The Bolognese Eclectics, and the Naturalists who came after them, could not dispense with the technical science which he had built up. With Titian in fact the last trace of mediæval and primitive expression vanishes from oil-painting. Almost all the subsequent phases of the painter's craft are in some measure based upon his discoveries, and it is not until the rise of Impressionism towards the end of the nineteenth century, that we encounter a form of pictorial expression that is radically different from his.

## CHAPTER X

### *The Venetians of the Sixteenth Century*

WE have already noticed the sharp distinction which separated the temper of the Florentines from that of the Venetians during the fifteenth century. The distinction persisted to the end. Italy to the west of the Apennines maintained a spirit of curiosity, of inquiry into the science of design and the basic principles of painting. The Venetians, in general, were content to develop the practical side of their craft, using all the available resources of colour and brushwork to carry out with the utmost splendour such commissions as might come to them. Whether the commission was for a great ceremonial piece, a devotional picture, a mythological subject, or a portrait, the client would be sure of getting something rich, effective and soundly painted. Such variations as we find are not due to the testing or development of new theories, but to the inevitable variations in the temper, taste, training and capacity of the individual workman. While Western Italy was all distraught by foreign invasions, the sack of Rome in 1527 being the supreme disaster, the

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Venetian artists could pursue their craft undisturbed, with the noble example of Bellini, the romantic figure of Giorgione, and the technical accomplishment of Titian to inspire them. There was no lack of wealthy patrons, and the vigorous mountain stock from which the majority of the painters came, provided an energy which was not exhausted for nearly a hundred years. Capable painters, indeed, are so numerous that we cannot mention here more than a few of those who have left works which deserve to be remembered.

The death of Giorgione in 1510 left the field open to his pupils and followers, and probably the contents of his studio too. It is difficult to explain otherwise the group of interesting pictures in which Giorgione's work seems inextricably mixed with that of evidently different hands. Of these pupils Titian was the greatest, but several others were notable men. The oldest is Jacopo PALMA. Trained first under Bellini, and then strongly influenced by Giorgione, as our fine portrait of *A Poet* (636) in the National Gallery will prove, Palma developed side by side with Titian the modern method of painting with broader sweeps of the brush, and with more solid pigment than the Bellinesque artists employed. But his talent was more indolent than Titian's; his sense of form less exacting. In one or two large altarpieces at Venice and Vicenza, he displays a breadth of style and a com-

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mand of silvery colour worthy of a great master: but in general he was content to paint "Sacred Conversations," where the Madonna is grouped with various saints in a broadly treated landscape, or to turn out fancy portraits of comely golden-haired ladies, like the *Flora* (3939) in the Mond Collection. The *Venus and Cupid* in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge is among the best examples in England of his customary style.

SEBASTIANO "del Piombo," another pupil of Giorgione, left Venice for Rome shortly after his master's death. There he became a well-known figure. Friendship with Michelangelo resulted in our vast *Raising of Lazarus* (1) and the *Holy Family* (1450) at Trafalgar Square. A comparison there with his earlier Giorgionesque *Daughter of Herodias* (2493) will show how totally his style changed in the course of a few years. He was the first to give Raphael and the other painters in Rome some idea of Venetian colouring, and a few of his portraits deserve to be remembered, but in general Sebastiano's work is heavy both in tone and temper. Another wanderer was Lorenzo LOTTO, who also spent some years at Rome, and in the course of his travels may have supplied the Venetian influence which we have noted in Correggio. Lotto was an unequal artist, usually seen to the best advantage in his portraits. Of these there are good examples in the National Gallery, (the *Protonotary Apostolic*,

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*Giuliano* [1105] is specially fine), and at Hampton Court. Best of all perhaps is the portrait of *An Old Man* in the Brera at Milan. Lotto's numerous altarpieces and "Sacred Conversations" are generally weak in drawing, and have neither the breadth of design nor the glow of colour which other Venetians obtained. The *Triumph of Chastity* in the Rospigliosi Palace at Rome is perhaps the most attractive of his compositions. As a contrast to Lotto's gentle and rather pathetic temper, the robust force of CARIANI might be quoted, but he contributed so little of his own to the art that the mention of his name must be sufficient for us here.

BONIFAZIO was a painter of unequal quality. In his earlier phase he was one of Giorgione's ablest followers and an assistant to Palma. Gifted with an eye for glowing harmonies of colour and for a certain rather wistful feminine beauty, he seems to have been cursed, like Palma, with a dreamy and indolent habit of mind. So he became responsible for many rather slipshod "Sacred Conversations" in which splendour of colour does not conceal an idle hand and a vacant mind. But in one or two large compositions, such as *The Rich Man's Feast* at Venice, and *The Finding of Moses* at Milan, he puts forth his full power. The Biblical themes are merely an excuse for presenting Venetian country-house parties in colour schemes of such variegated richness, that we might wonder for a

DOSSO DOSSI  
CIRCE

Sir Joseph Durseen





## *The Venetians of the Sixteenth Century*

moment whether Bonifazio's gift in this respect was not unique. Paris BORDONE was another rich colourist, but his range is very narrow, and his quality of paint often comes too near to that of wax or strawberry jam.

Before discussing the great Venetians of the next generation, Tintoretto and Paul Veronese, it may be convenient to consider the painters who were drawn into the Venetian circle from the surrounding territory. From Ferrara came DOSSO DOSSI, a painter with a very personal fancy and character, never quite rising to greatness, but seldom failing to interest. Our *Muse inspiring a Court Poet* (1234) will illustrate his early Giorgionesque mood: the *Circe* of the Borghese Gallery is typical of his customary temper; his *Adoration of the Kings* (3924) in the Mond Collection shows his later style. More attractive than any is the *Circe*, now in the collection of Sir Joseph Duveen. With Dosso may be mentioned another Ferrarese, L'ORTOLANO, who though he remained unmoved by the influence of the new movement in Venice, painted two or three altarpieces in the old manner of such impressive power as to make his name a memorable one. Our *SS. Sebastian Roch and Demetrius* (669) is one of these rarities.

From the northern side of Venice come two other painters known by the names of their respective birthplaces, Pordenone and Bassano. The

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work of PORDENONE can only be studied in North Italy. His principal works are in fresco, and display sometimes a surprising grandeur of conception and breadth of design, but lack the refinement and consistency of purpose which a great painter requires. His pupil Licinio became a prolific painter of portraits, the earliest of which are in the romantic mood of Giorgione. Jacopo BASSANO, devoting himself to Biblical themes (and occasional portraiture), utilized his knowledge of rustic life and landscape so effectually that the devotional side of his work is consistently made a pretext for painting crowds of market women and country folk with their beasts and their baskets of produce. But to this task Bassano brought so fine an eye for colour and such a force of brushwork that his best work is admirable, though its repute is diminished by the number of repetitions which his family and his pupils produced. And if we examine our large dark painting of *Christ driving the Money Changers from the Temple* (228) in the National Gallery, we shall see that among these followers or pupils ought to be numbered the marvellous artist known in Spain as El Greco. The colour and handling of many passages in this picture are almost indistinguishable from his.

Further to the west, Verona had long possessed a school of her own. After the days of Pisanello, Liberale and Domenico Morone had laid a founda-



Verona, S. Bernardino

Photograph : Alinar

FRANCESCO MORONE  
CRUCIFIXION



## *The Venetians of the Sixteenth Century*

tion. Bonsignori, moving to Venice and thence to Mantua, had displayed real power, especially in his portraits. Francesco MORONE, once or twice, notably in his sublime *Crucifixion* at Verona, rises beyond the charming tranquillity of our National Gallery *Madonna* (285). Girolamo dai Libri exhibits the same placid atmosphere in his *Madonna* groups at Verona and at Trafalgar Square (748). It is not great art, but it is wholly sane and comforting. Of the rest Paolo MORANDO had the most personality, and once at least, in his *Descent from the Cross* at Verona, comes near to painting a great picture, which his rather older contemporary Caroto never did. Our *Madonna* (777) in the National Gallery illustrates Morando's characteristic use of ashen-grey half-tones to support a not unpleasing scheme of colour. Though unimportant individually, these painters of Verona have in common a certain breadth and simplicity and restfulness, which reappear a little later, glorified and transfigured by the genius of Paul Veronese.

The contribution of Brescia to the Venetian School was more weighty. SAVOLDO, for example, has real individuality, with a personal taste in colour and a pleasure in effects of twilight which make his work a distinct feature in any collection. Even in the National Gallery, the masterly silver grey and moonlight blue of *Mary Magdalen approaching the Sepulchre* (1031) and the deep rich tones of

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*S. Jerome* (3092) hold their own in the strongest company. ROMANINO, more fluent, more various, and far more prolific, is not really so complete a master. It is true that in his early Giorgionesque time he comes very near to Giorgione himself; once or twice, as in our big National Gallery altarpiece (297), we see how much that is good he had learned from Titian. Romanino, too, was one of the few men of his age who were real masters of fresco, in which medium some of his most vigorous and original work was done. When he paints in oil, his facility often leads him to be so loose and uncertain in his handling that, with all his fire and richness of colour, we feel him to be a slipshod craftsman.

The gifts of MORETTO were more strictly controlled. Not only does he seek and frequently attain to real grandeur of style, but his harmonies of silvery colour, in his fortunate moments, have an irresistible attraction. The *St. Justina* at Vienna, and his *Madonna* at Paitone near Brescia, are two such notable triumphs. Of the altarpieces in the National Gallery, the larger (625) will give an idea of Moretto's majestic design, the smaller (1165), of his lustrous colouring. We are fortunate also in possessing two of his best portraits (299 and 1025), in which an atmosphere of romance and good breeding add distinction to their fine technical qualities. MORONI was a man of much narrower



Vienna Gallery

Photograph : Bruckmann

MORETTO  
ST. JUSTINA



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talent, but he used that talent so well that, in his own field, he is a master whom we come to respect more and more. Reasonable truth of appearance coupled with complete truth of character are Moroni's ideals, and he attains them not infrequently. Sometimes of course the result is plain prose. Often, however, we find ourselves fascinated, as we might be in a good novel, by the searching analysis of what to all outward showing is a quite ordinary man. Our *Tailor* (697) and *Lawyer* (742) are famous; yet many another head by Moroni will prove to be no less profoundly real if we look well into it. He is commonly underestimated; perhaps because he makes no open appeal, either to our admiration, our reverence, our curiosity, or our pity—except in so far as all humanity, when stripped of its trappings, looks just a little pitiful.

Returning now to Venice, and the middle of the century, we come to TINTORETTO. In contrast to the general tendency of the Venetians, Tintoretto, from the first, was unwilling to accept the matter which came to hand, and paint it just as well as he could. In his intellectual curiosity, his insatiate ambition to experiment with new trains of thought, new modes of expression, new combinations of form and colour, he recalls the Florentines. In his blending of Venetian colour with the heroic types of Michelangelo and Parmigiano he might be

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considered a knight-errant of the Eclectics,—of those who seek perfection by the combination of excellences gathered from divers schools and periods. But the Venetian element in his constitution, with his prodigal invention and strong personality, saved Tintoretto from being either insipid like the Eclectics, or academic like the Florentines. His Venetian temper made him a realist, so that even his most imaginative works rarely lack either the substance of actuality, or those touches of observation made direct from life which carry conviction with them to the spectator. Hence, too, comes the power of Tintoretto's portraiture. It looks more summary than that of Titian and the other Venetians, for Tintoretto's rapidity of execution was phenomenal, but when his subject has interested him, as in our National Gallery *Morosini* (4004), his insight is no less profound than Rembrandt's.

It is, however, upon his vast imaginative compositions that Tintoretto's reputation lives. The eloquence of Ruskin in "Modern Painters" (Vol. II, Chapter III), has familiarized us with their character, though the visitor to Venice, where alone Tintoretto can be properly estimated, may find it difficult at first to recapture Ruskin's enthusiasm. For Tintoretto's canvases are in general much darkened and discoloured by time, and it is only by degrees that their full quality becomes apparent. Titian, in the central period of his career, just because



Venice, Scuola di S. Rocco

Photograph: Anderson

**TINTORETTO**  
**CHRIST BEFORE PILATE**



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he is first and foremost a painter of substance, is apt to become gross and fleshy when treating the human form. To Tintoretto, with a similar instinct for substance, this materialism was distasteful. His forms must be solid, but they must also move and float upon clouds with the freedom and lightness proper to celestial beings. Borrowing therefore, from Michelangelo and others, a type of heroic form which suggested superhuman strength and activity, he gave it a setting of audacious and energetic rhythm, of flashing light, and of dramatic shadow, until materialism was swallowed up in mystery. We must admit that the result is often sensational, and sometimes extravagant, gloomy, or top-heavy. These are dangers which dependence upon *chiaroscuro*, upon strong contrasts of light and darkness, always carries with it. Also, as decorations, such things are restless and perhaps rather dismal company, compared with the more sunny and tranquil spaces of the older tradition. But of their power to move us there can be no question. And in London we are fortunate. Not often do Tintoretto's rhythms swing into such felicitous harmony as in *The Origin of the Milky Way* (1313); very rarely has his colouring so well defied the assaults of time. Our *S. George and the Dragon* (16), too, with its visionary landscape so full of marvel and movement, is a delightful epitome of his romantic vein, a far more precious possession

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than the big black picture of *Christ washing the Disciples' Feet* (1130), or than the well-known group of *The Muses* at Hampton Court, though that will give those who have not visited Venice some idea of Tintoretto's ordinary style.

To all this display of energy, physical and intellectual, Paul VERONESE presents the complete antithesis. He appears to view life and art with the tranquillity typical of his native Verona; he works with the ease and breadth, the solid pigment, and lustrous colour of the Veronese painters, differing from them only in quality of his craftsmanship and his invention. Much, of course, he learned from Titian; still more from Tintoretto's flying figures and agitated rhythms. These, however, pass into the work of Veronese as large and stately elements of design, so that his compositions with all their force and elaboration remain spacious and restful. The vehement emotions, the passionate search for spiritual significance, which were part of Tintoretto's nature, were unknown to Veronese. He was thus able to concentrate all his powers upon the technical problems of design and execution, and to plan with the same majestic ease a great devotional picture or the emptiest and most conventional allegory. So he became the supremely successful artist of the Venetian State, executing there a series of decorative paintings, which in fertility of invention, richness of colour, and sus-



Muzano, S. Pietro Martire

Photograph : Anderson

VERONESE  
ST. JEROME



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tained accomplishment are unequalled. No painter understood better the geometry of his business, or applied it in such princely fashion to the intricate problems of perspective which painting on ceilings must involve. No one makes such superb use of patterned stuffs, or paints them with such endless and pleasurable facility. No one, too, better understood the nature of colour in its relation to light and shade; or kept so happily the mean between coldness and hotness, between paleness and saturation. In all these matters Veronese is a model craftsman; it is only on the emotional and intellectual side that we find him falling short.

To appreciate his greatness we need not go so far as Venice. The vast *Marriage of Cana* in the Louvre is one of his acknowledged masterpieces, specially notable for the harmony in blue which dominates the colour scheme. Our *Family of Darius before Alexander* (294) in the National Gallery is another fine illustration of his qualities. For his mastery of the geometry of design we need not look beyond our *S. Helena* (1041) and the panels representing *Unfaithfulness* (1318) and *Happy Union* (1326). It is surprising that with such largeness of design, such beauty of silvery colour and such simplicity of brushwork, Veronese is not more often and more warmly commended to the notice of students. Ruskin, I think, is the single critic who has done him justice. Yet all great artists

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who have carried to perfection some aspect of their craft have proved hard to follow, and the excellences of Veronese may be no more communicable than those of Michelangelo. Certainly with him Venetian art comes to an end, for the time being at least. Not until a full century later is the stage occupied by any commanding figure. Then, when Tiepolo, Canaletto and Guardi have made their bow, the curtain falls, for another hundred years, upon the art of Venice, and of all Italy too.

## CHAPTER XI

### *The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*

THE Sack of Rome by the Imperialists in 1527 marks a turning-point in the history of Florentine painting. The natural creative impulses which had driven the art of the Renaissance steadily forward for a hundred and fifty years had been active almost up to the moment of that disaster. After it they were sustained only in the person of the ageing Michelangelo. Everywhere else the old spontaneous energy was gone. The arts seemed to have reached their culmination. Full mastery of the human form in action had been achieved. There were no new worlds to be conquered.

But the demand for works of art continued and increased; and the demand had to be supplied. So pictures came to be constructed by ingenious manipulation and re-combination of the materials which Michelangelo, Raphael and Correggio had provided. Conscious artifice took the place of inspiration and, since excellent technical training could be obtained at the newly founded Academies, this derivative art was by no means incompetent.

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As might be expected, however, the general standard was rather commonplace, the results rather tedious. Only once or twice do we meet with individual and original figures who have left a mark upon other ages than their own.

The seed of decline had been sown at the very beginning of the century by Fra BARTOLOMEO. He was the first to substitute the lay figure for the living model; the first to build up compositions thereon with swelling draperies and imposing gestures. His ingenuity in thus constructing a kind of picturesque grandeur, added to his power as a draughtsman and the natural love of beauty which shines out from his altarpiece in the Duomo at Lucca, made Fra Bartolommeo a real force in Florence. Though to our modern eyes his flowing robes and grandiose poses do not conceal the emptiness underneath, his method provided so convenient a cloak for those who had nothing particular of their own to say that it was naturally popular.<sup>1</sup> Raphael, even, was strongly influenced by it, and not to his advantage.

Fra Bartolommeo's partner, ALBERTINELLI, has left us one dignified work, *The Visitation* in the Uffizi at Florence. Andrea del SARTO was a man of finer technical gifts, an excellent draughts-

<sup>1</sup> His follower Sogliani, and Granacci the friend of Michelangelo, are minor figures of the time; so is Franciabigio, the partner of Andrea del Sarto, chiefly remembered now for his romantic portraits.



*Florence, Uffizi*

*Photograph : Anderson*

**ANDREA DEL SARTO  
MADONNA DELL'ARPIE**



## *The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*

man with an almost Venetian feeling for colour, so that by the men of his time he was called "the faultless." But in spite of some excellent portraits, like our National Gallery *Sculptor* (690), and a number of agreeable devotional pieces, Andrea's work as a whole will not stand searching scrutiny. In it we are conscious of a monotony and emptiness like Fra Bartolommeo's; indeed some of his most famous works, like the *Madonna of the Harpies* in the Uffizi at Florence, might be used to illustrate the graces and defects of Fra Bartolommeo's own style.

With PARMIGIANO these graces were still further systematized. By deliberately elongating the faces and limbs of his figures, he invented an elegant Mannerism which became widely popular. Travelling over the Alps into France it became acclimatized there<sup>1</sup>, and in the eighteenth century we recognize its survival in many of the full-length portraits of Sir Joshua Reynolds. In itself this mannerism was not wholly contemptible. The long sweeping curves which it introduced have the merit of giving a rhythmic congruity to a design. Where we find them allied with character, as in a portrait by Reynolds, or with imaginative enthusiasm, as with William Blake, we feel the mannerism

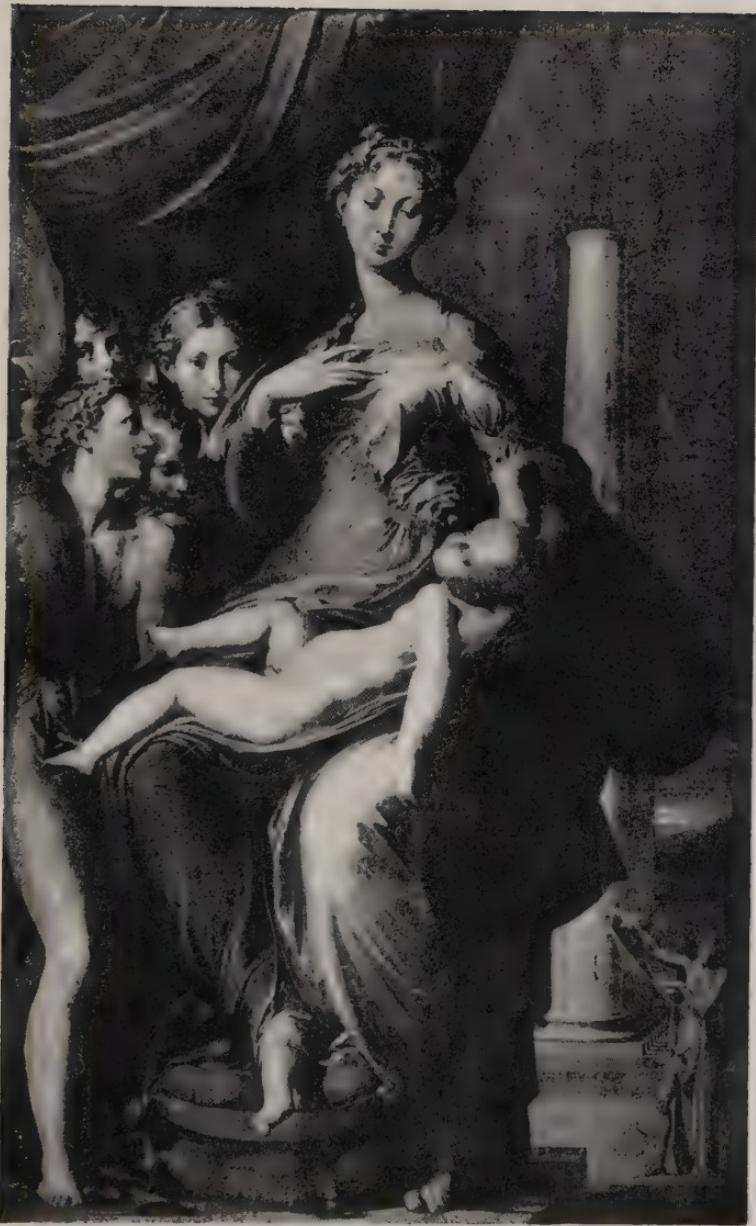
<sup>1</sup> As the School of Fontainebleau. The Florentine Rosso was the first to work there, but the mannerism of the School was accentuated by the Bolognese Primaticcio, who came to Paris in 1531.

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to be not only pardonable but appropriate. It is only when such elegances are used to hide a lack of real significance and invention, that they become tedious. Parmigiano's *Madonna of the Long Neck* in the Pitti Palace is the typical example of this mannerism : most people, however, will prefer his admirable portraits to these more artificial products.

BAROCCIO influenced art in a different way. He, too, borrowed lavishly from Correggio, taking his prettiness even more freely than his elegance. Working usually in a very personal scheme of colour, characterized by vivid reds and yellows, so that "his figures look as if they fed upon roses," Baroccio interpreted the grace and fluttering draperies of Correggio with a suave and rather florid brushwork, which artists in Italy and elsewhere were quick to imitate. His popularity extended both to France and to the Netherlands. There it exercised so powerful an influence upon Rubens and his following, that more than one of their works might pass, at a glance, for a painting by the Italian. Baroccio may be said to have initiated the gay and fluent style of handling oil-paint which finds its final expression in Tiepolo's brilliant decorations.

These rhetorical tendencies were countered by the CARRACCI, three cousins, Lodovico, Agostino and Annibale, who in 1585 founded an Academy



Florence, Pitti

Photograph : Anderson

**PARMIGIANO**  
**MADONNA DEL COLLO LUNGO**



## *The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*

at Bologna, and the School of the Eclectics. The Eclectic programme aimed, in theory at least, at combining the several excellences of all other schools. And the Carracci tried to do their work thoroughly; for their teaching included the history and theory of art as well as technical practice. Technically their programme was a formidable one. The fully equipped artist must unite, among other qualities, the drawing of the Roman School, the movement and *chiaroscuro* of the Venetians, the *terribilitá* of Michelangelo, the naturalism of Titian, the balance of Raphael, with the grace of Correggio and Parmigiano. The Carracci overlooked, as all Eclectics do, the inevitable sequel. Qualities so inconsistent or contrary simply cancel one another when set side by side; the result is bound to be almost nothing. So the Bolognese Eclectics, like all others of their kind, are fundamentally insipid, and lack the definite character by which alone a work of art can maintain a lasting interest. Of the three cousins Lodovico was the leader, Annibale the most gifted. His drawings, his decorative frescoes in the Farnese Palace, and his feeling for landscape reveal a genuine personality which even his Eclecticism could not wholly suppress.

Among the pupils of the Carracci, DOMENICHINO traditionally comes first, in virtue of his *Last Communion of S. Jerome* in the Vatican. But this learned composition is too heavy for the taste

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of to-day, and Domenichino's natural gifts show better in such graceful products as the *Guardian Angel* at Naples, and the *Diana* of the Borghese Gallery. GUIDO Reni was much more facile and influential. His exceptional skill with the brush and his faculty of preserving grace and suavity at all costs, made him one of the most popular figures of his age. But the love of the graceful and the suave leads Guido to be singularly false and artificial when handling solemn or formidable themes. So his sorrowing Saints and Virgins are merely sentimental: his *Samson* at Bologna an opera-house hero. Yet Guido is not a contemptible artist. He retains enough of a great tradition to dignify his rhetoric, and in his well-known *Aurora* of the Rospigliosi Palace our thoughts are carried back beyond the days of the Carracci to those of Raphael.

The Eclectics had superseded the Mannerists, but their supremacy was quickly challenged by a new movement, and this was of such vital consequence to the arts that its effects have lasted to our own day. CARAVAGGIO, sensational in his life as in his art, was the leader of the revolt, and his followers the "Naturalists" carried his doctrines to Naples, where they came into touch with Spain; and to Holland, where they helped to form the Dutch tradition of the seventeenth century. In Italy the reaction from Eclecticism was inevitable. Ideals



Bologna, Academy

Photograph : Anderson

GUIDO RENI

SAMSON



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of human beauty had been studied till they became insipid; gestures had been studied till they became theatrical poses; harmony and suavity had been studied till the result was ineffective compromise. No country that contained any seed of artistic vitality could put up for long with such barren conventionalism, and Caravaggio's reaction was naturally violent. Models taken direct from the unrefined populace: gestures with the effectiveness of melodrama; savage contrasts of strong light and unrelieved blackness, were the elements of the new style. It was a revolt against Academic idealism, of which we may realize the nature more clearly if we remember the similar revolt which took place in France more than sixty years ago, under the leadership of Courbet and Manet. Naturally it shocked the tradition of the time. Poussin described Caravaggio as one "come to destroy Painting." Among the most typical specimens of Caravaggio's style, *The Entombment* in the Vatican, and *The Death of the Virgin* in the Louvre, may be mentioned; the most attractive, perhaps, is the *Flight into Egypt* in the Doria Gallery at Rome.

It was at Naples rather than in Rome that the Naturalists flourished. There, Caravaggio's example inspired the Spanish Ribera and, passing into Spain, provided the artistic environment in which Velazquez, Zurbaran and Murillo were brought up. Honthorst and others carried the

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new style to Holland. In the National Gallery we can compare the Dutchman's vast *Christ before Pilate* (3679) with Caravaggio's *Christ at Emmaus* (172), and recognize in the one the germ of the romantic and psychological art of Rembrandt, in the other the foundations upon which Velazquez built up his dignified realism. In Holland the sharp contrasts of light and darkness which Caravaggio favoured, became characteristic of Dutch figure painting till the middle of the century. Then the luminism of De Hooch and Vermeer of Delft introduced, for one or two decades, a breadth and truth and daylight brightness which have never been recaptured, either in Holland or elsewhere.

A second conspicuous figure among the Naturalists was SALVATOR Rosa. Though he was a forcible and accomplished figure-painter, as his *Cain and Abel* in the Doria Gallery shows, it is by his work in landscape that he is chiefly known. Landscape had become a separate branch of painting in Rome at the beginning of the seventeenth century. A German, Adam Elsheimer, had led the way with a series of tiny paintings on copper. He was followed by CLAUDE, by birth a Lorainer, by training and residence an Italian. Working much from nature, Claude mastered the secrets of light and of aerial tone to such a degree that even to-day his name is held in honour.

Light, with the Naturalists, had been a pic-

Peter M. Allen

CARAVAGGIO

REST ON THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

Fine Art Gallery





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torial quantity which came into being only as the necessary complement to their black shadows. Light with Claude became an all-pervading medium, illuminating, in due degree, every part of a picture, and blending those parts into harmonious unity. The exquisite quality of his sunshine and twilight reconciled his admirers to the material of his pictures, which was too often mediocre. Though Claude's studies from nature were as fresh and free as modern water-colour work, the "Classical Landscapes," to which he devoted the time he spent in his studio, were accumulations of motives like those which Annibale Carracci and others had already utilized. Clumps of trees, pleasant expanses of water, ships and boats and towers and temples, are ingeniously disposed over the picture surface, while in the foreground a few unsatisfactory puppets illustrate some classical or Biblical story.

To Salvator's determined pessimism all this sunlit peace and complacency was abhorrent. He was the first Italian to appreciate the formidable elements in nature, the menace of rolling clouds, shattered crags and lonely mountains; the first to see beauty in ruin and decay; the first romantic landscape painter.

In Rome, where Salvator finally settled, several other notable figures had been at work, among them the Frenchman Nicolas Poussin. He gained

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lasting fame by the judgment and scholarship he displayed in adapting the majesty and simplicity of the ripe Renaissance tradition to the scale of the easel picture; establishing, as it were, a sort of canon of pictorial balance and proportion which has exercised a dominant influence upon art in France. Of the Italians, the facile Pietro da Cortona set the fashion in decorative painting, but left nothing memorable behind. Andrea SACCHI, one of Poussin's teachers, in his *Vision of S. Romuald* in the Vatican, produced what is perhaps the most grave and striking picture of the time. GUERCINO blended something of the force of the Naturalists with the science of the Carracci, and had, too, such a gift of rich colour as to make him a figure who cannot be omitted even from the briefest summary. He was a prolific painter, who became popular in England during the eighteenth century. Though Reynolds does not say much about Guercino in his "Discourses," it is clear that he learned much from his example.

At this point the history of Italian art becomes a matter for specialists. One or two names like those of Sassoferato and Carlo Dolci, are popular through their Madonna-pieces. There are a number of able portrait-painters, a few known by signed works, the majority still a subject for speculation. There are painters like the Genoese Bernardo Strozzi, and in a later age Magnasco, who are now

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returning to favour. And it would be easy to give a catalogue of men once famous, and by no means incompetent, who carried on the tradition of painting altarpieces skilfully, and even brilliantly, right into the eighteenth century. But their skill is so impersonal, that it is hard to distinguish between one painter and his neighbour, and none of them bring to their art very much that is novel or of living interest for us.

The last brief revival came from Venice. In the reign of Queen Anne, a Venetian painter Sebastiano RICCI visited England for awhile. He had a flattering reception which was not wholly undeserved. Though rhetorical and facile like the other Italians of his day, Ricci had inherited some of the luminous decorative quality of Paul Veronese, and his best works, such as the *Pope Pius V. and Saints* in the Gesuati at Venice, deserve far more notice than they commonly receive. With PIAZZETTA, the next in the line of succession, this cleverness is strengthened by a force of tone derived from Caravaggio and the Naturalists, partly by way of Guercino whom Piazzetta specially studied, and partly, it would seem, by way of a Dutch artist, Jan Lys, who had worked and died in Venice. Our *Mercury and Argus* (3571) in the National Gallery, will show the style of Lys; our *Sacrifice of Isaac* (3163) will give some idea of the power of Piazzetta.

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Upon this double foundation, the luminous decorative tradition of which Ricci was an exponent, and the Naturalist vigour of Piazzetta, the genius of Giambattista (G. B.) TIEPOLO erected a dazzling structure. The brilliant *Adoration of the Magi* at Munich, painted in 1753, will indicate clearly how these two ideals, apparently so divergent, could be brought into harmony; the dark shadows of the Naturalists being foiled by such a blaze of light and colour that the whole effect is stimulating and sparkling. It is, however, as a decorator that Tiepolo is most famous. All visitors to Venice will remember the series of frescoes illustrating the story of *Antony and Cleopatra* in the Palazzo Labia. Here he shows himself a gifted and spirited heir of Paul Veronese. In the Royal Palace at Madrid and the Episcopal Palace at Wurzburg, his ambitions find a wider scope. The vast ceilings are covered with such arabesques of clouds and floating figures as no other painter invented. Despising the rounded sweeps and flourishes with which most decorators eke out the paucity of their thoughts, Tiepolo delights in drawing sharply defined nervous figures, with crisp silhouettes which give life to the detail of his huge designs, while his unerring sense of tone keeps everything united in one all-embracing atmosphere. His sense of colour is no less original and lively. Possibly he derived some of his harmonies of pale yellow, pale blue and strong red



Munich Gallery

Photograph : Mansell

TIEPOLO  
ADORATION OF THE MAGI



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from Chinese fabrics, which were then much in fashion, but in his use of them Tiepolo stands alone. Our little *Deposition* (1333) in the National Gallery, will give some idea of the man's power: his amazing invention and executive facility can only be judged from his work on a larger scale. His son Giandomenico, (G. D.) Tiepolo, followed his father so successfully that it is not always easy to distinguish their works.

The great Italian tradition of decorative painting could not have had a more extraordinary and sensational finish than that which Tiepolo provides. But he was not the sole artist of the time whose name deserves record. In a humbler vein, Pietro LONGHI did for Venice a service similar to that which Hogarth did for London, leaving a picture of the life and habits of the day which, with much from Tiepolo, was utilized afterwards by Goya, and so passes into modern art. Longhi was no such painter as the Englishman, and no such analyst of character, but his works often have an innocent freshness of outlook which gives them a perennial attraction. Our *Rhinoceros in an Arena* (1101) is an excellent and typical example.

Venice at this time was the resort of foreign visitors, many of them English, who desired to take away with them some reminiscence of a city so unique. Among those who provided these views of Venice were two whose fame has withstood the test

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of time. The older was Antonio CANALETTO. His exceptional power and skill attracted the notice of the British Consul, Joseph Smith, through whom many of his finest works came to England; particularly to the collection of George III at Windsor Castle, where they still remain. Two noble specimens in the National Gallery, the *View in Venice* (127) and the *Scuola di San Rocco* (937), exhibit Canaletto's peculiar gifts. Not only is he an excellent draughtsman and designer, but in the handling of paint he had few superiors. The *View in Venice* in this respect is worthy of Velazquez. Canaletto fell a victim to his own facility. Visiting England, and achieving great popularity there, he grew more and more mannered in style, till at last the figures, which in his early pictures are admirably individualized and soundly done, became mere dolls made up of sparkling loops and blobs and flourishes of paint. For England, however, Canaletto's visit was important. His feeling for "fat" fluid pigment gave a substance to our native painting which it might otherwise have lacked, and neither Wilson nor Hogarth would have developed their style as they did, had they not studied the Venetian's handling. In Germany and North Italy Canaletto was followed, not unsuccessfully, by his nephew Bernardo Bellotto.

Francesco GUARDI, a Venetian of Tyrolean descent, the brother-in-law of Tiepolo, and at one

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time it seems an assistant to Canaletto, was a man of slighter gifts. The buildings of Canaletto are substantial, and are drawn with a firmness which at times comes near to mechanism. Guardi's brushwork is lighter and more sketchy. Venice, in his hands, becomes an airy lively place, where buildings in a general scheme of cool browns and greys harmonize pleasantly with skies of misty turquoise blue. It is not great art or great painting. Indeed, in its picturesque ideal and spirited touch, it is nearer to modern water-colour drawing than to any older tradition. That kinship, perhaps, explains the popularity which Guardi now enjoys, and makes him a link, though quite a minor one, between the past and the present. With him died out the last flicker of artistic creation in Italy, until SEGANTINI came to paint the dazzling snow and sunlight upon the high Alpine pastures.



## APPENDIX

I MAY perhaps add a few suggestions for the use of those who would like to carry their studies further. Great works of art do not yield their secrets all at once; so the best way of understanding good pictures is to look at them again and again. As Michelangelo says, "Painting is a music and a melody which intellect only can appreciate, and that with difficulty." Those who have ready access to great public galleries will have no difficulty in following up and consolidating their first interest in art by frequent visits to their favourite pictures. Even then they will need subsidiary material, if their interest is to develop into real knowledge. Those who can only visit galleries now and then will of course need subsidiary material still more. The master-works of several of the very greatest Italian painters are not to be found in any museum or gallery. They remain on the walls of the buildings in Italy for which they were painted, and can only be thoroughly studied on the spot, or with the aid of good reproductions.

Fortunately we have no longer to rely upon inaccurate and expensive engravings to remind us of these and other more or less inaccessible *chefs d'œuvre*. Almost everything of the first rank in Europe has now been photographed, and prints can usually be obtained without much trouble or expense. The photographs of Italian paintings by Alinari, Anderson, Brogi and others are cheap, and can be got through any good printseller, or firms like Messrs.

## *Appendix*

Mansell of Teddington. Volumes of reproductions of the work of particular masters were issued some time ago by Messrs. Newnes in their "Art Library." These now seem to be out of print, and their place has been taken by the more comprehensive German series "Klassiker der Kunst." The illustrations to most English books tend to be smaller than those of their Continental rivals, and useful only as mementoes of composition. For serious study they are too small altogether. If we are to understand what good work is, it must be reproduced for us upon a scale which is large enough to show the artist's handling clearly.

For example: from a small reproduction it is quite impossible to get a proper idea of the power and the infinite variety of Botticelli's rhythm, or even to distinguish between his hand and that of his assistants. But if we look at the wonderful plates in Mr. Yashiro's book, published a few years ago by the Medici Society, our eyes are opened. Here reproductions of each composition are supplemented by reproductions of selected details on a large scale, and these details are things of such vigour and such loveliness that we derive from them an entirely novel and delightful perception of the man's genius. A few such large-scale photographs of details should form part of every student's collection. If he pleases he can choose his own details. Any part of any picture in the National Gallery can be photographed officially on a 12 in.  $\times$  10 in. scale for quite a moderate charge.

Reproductions in colour are not always quite satisfactory. Though some of the colour plates issued by the Medici Society, and by certain Continental firms, give a very good general idea of paintings in oil and in tempera, Italian frescoes have proved rather troublesome. It is doubtful whether the chromo-lithographs issued more than sixty

## *Appendix*

years ago by the Arundel Society are not, even now, the most useful things of the kind. They have certain disadvantages. They were made from water-colour copies which are still preserved in the National Gallery. These copies as a series are wonderfully good. Yet the copyists were naturally inclined to stipple and restore passages that were damaged or slightly faded, and the resulting tidiness and smoothness are necessarily somewhat accentuated by the printing process. Yet the results do give a more just idea of the tone and effect of Italian frescoes than most of the more recent attempts to recapture their quality.

Drawings formed so large and important a part of the output of all the great Florentines that their study is a necessary part of any serious survey of the period. It is peculiarly fascinating, because a drawing brings us into intimate communion with its maker; we seem to see his thought taking shape, his eye and hand actually at work. Admirable facsimiles of famous drawings are available; those issued by the Vasari Society are among the best and the cheapest. And in Mr. Ede's "Florentine Drawings of the Quattrocento" (Benn) the student has an admirable preface to the whole subject. But the study of drawings is hardly less difficult than it is absorbing, and the beginner would be wise, I think, to defer spending much time upon it until he has a good working acquaintance with the history and criticism of Italian painting.

There is no more brilliant epitome of the characteristics and qualities of the various Italian Schools than the four small books by Mr. Berenson: "The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance," "The Venetian Painters of the Renaissance," "The Central Italian Painters of the Renaissance," and "The North Italian Painters of the Renaissance"—all published by Messrs. Putnam. Mr. Roger Fry's little

## *Appendix*

book on Giovanni Bellini (Unicorn Press) has, I believe, long been out of print, but those who light upon it will find it an excellent and sympathetic guide to Venetian art in its early phases. Mr. Fry's edition of "The Discourses of Sir Joshua Reynolds" (Seeley) is no less useful as an introduction to later Italian painting. Vasari's famous "Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects" is the foundation upon which all subsequent historians have built, and contains much excellent reading. Mr. De Vere's translation (Medici Society), though somewhat costly, is the best I know. "Stories of the Italian Artists" (Chatto) will serve as a popular substitute. It is a great help to be able to realize that the old masters were real and often rather lively personalities. "The Mind of the Artist," by Mrs. Laurence Binyon (Chatto), is another little book in which the painters are revealed by their own words.

Such books have the merit of preserving the local colour of Italy, which is apt to fade out of the works of her more elaborate critics and historians, among whom Crowe and Cavalcaselle and Morelli represent the past, as Adolfo Venturi and Mr. Van Marle do the present age. The many volumes of the two latter writers are an invaluable storehouse of history, criticism and illustrations. Individual painters are dealt with in more than one series of books at moderate prices, such as those published by Messrs. Bell and Messrs. Duckworth. A short list of other serviceable books on painters and painting will be found at the end of the Illustrated Guide to the National Gallery, which can be obtained at Trafalgar Square for eighteenpence. But the National Gallery itself, with its unrivalled sequence of Italian pictures, is of course the permanent and essential guide to knowledge.

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